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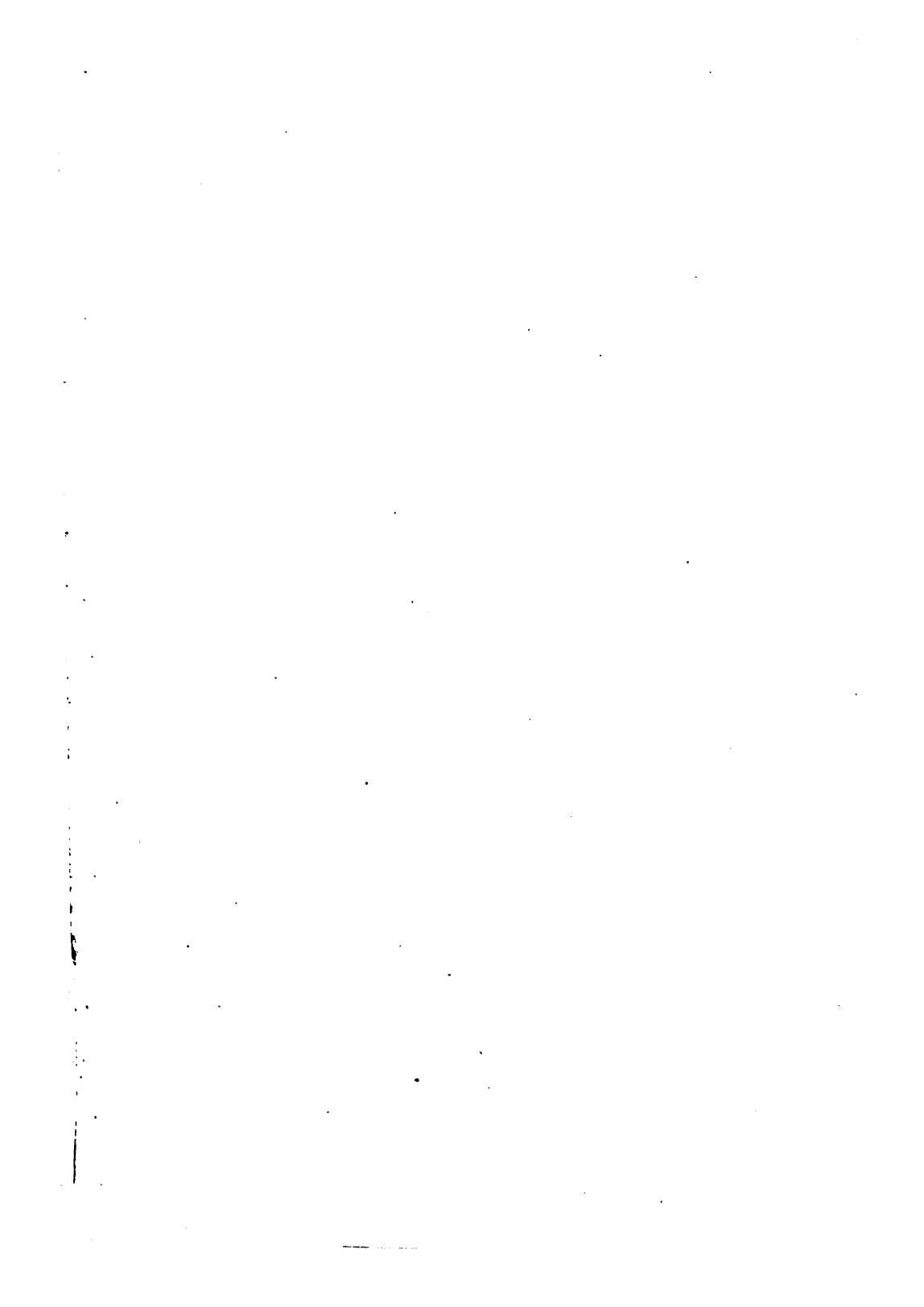


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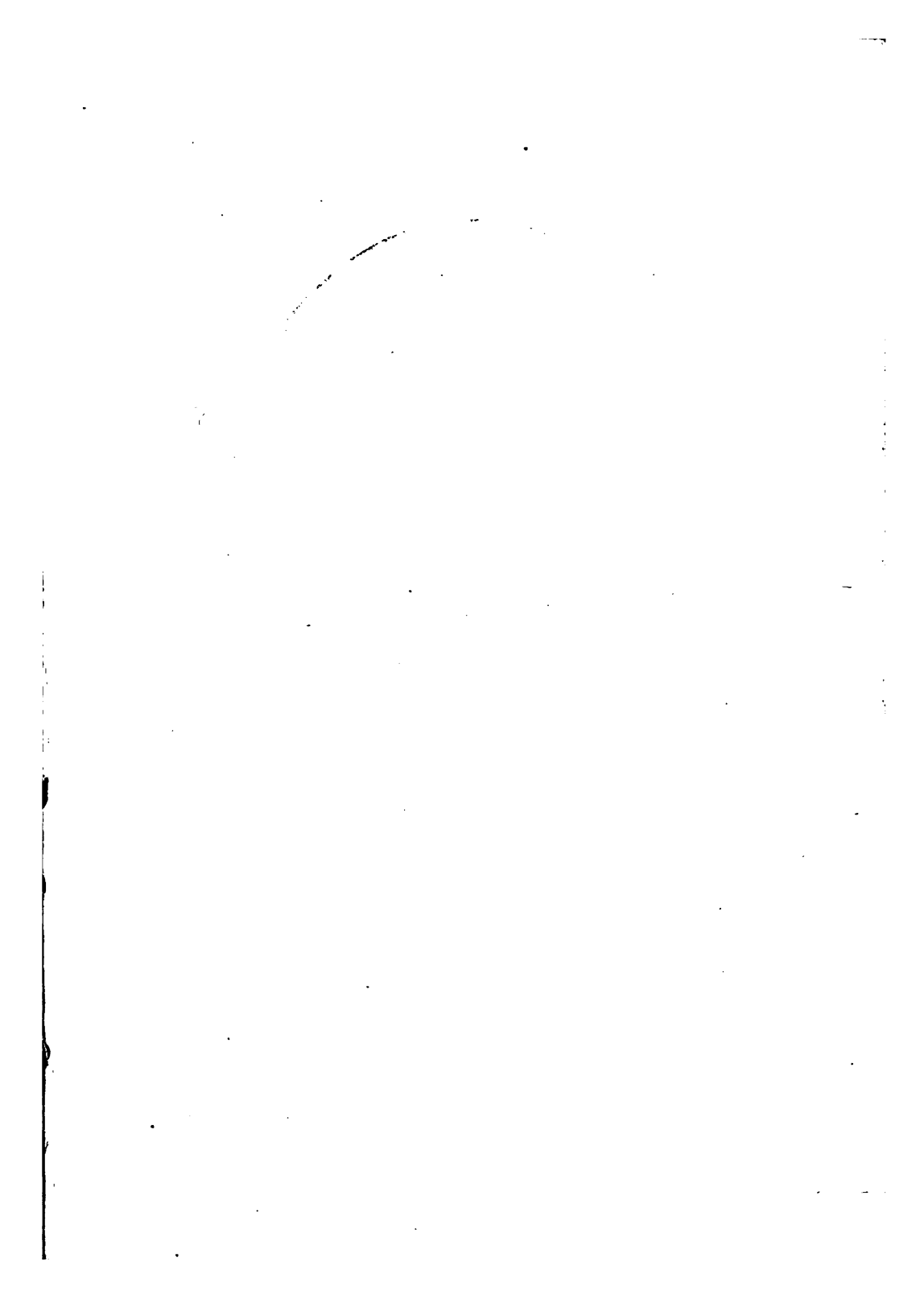
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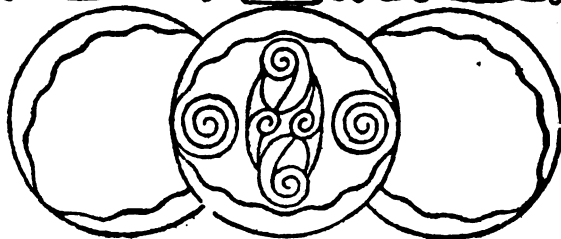
CONFESSIONS OF  
AN OPERA SINGER  
BY KATHLEEN HOWARD

NEW YORK



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ALFRED A. KNOPF



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*To*  
*Marjorie*



## FOREWORD

So many fantastic tales have come to us of students' life abroad, of their temptations, trials, finances, successes and failures, that I have attempted to give here the true story of the preparation for an operatic career, and its fruition. My road leads from New York to Paris, to Germany and thence to London, and back to the Metropolitan Opera House. My operatic experiences in Germany are inalienably associated with the lives of the people, particularly with the German officer class, viewed publicly and privately; in fact in the town where I was first engaged, Metz, I found they were as vital a part of the Opera house life as the singers themselves. Their arrogance tainted the town life as well, and here I first became acquainted with the pitiful attempt at swagger and brilliancy which often covered a state of grinding poverty, or the thwarted natural domestic instincts which were ruthlessly sacrificed to the "uniform"—the all-desirable entrée to society, for which no price was too high to pay. I hope this book will be of interest not only to those whose goal is the operatic

## **FOREWORD**

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or concert stage, but to those to whom "human documents" appeal. It is a story of real people, real obstacles overcome, and contains much intimate talk of back-stage life in opera houses.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE WAY IT ALL HAPPENED

**I** WAS very young and I was engaged to be married. We had just lost our money in rather dramatic fashion, and we were all doing what we could to supply the sudden deficit. My sister began to prepare herself to be a teacher, my brother left his boarding school and came home to go into a friend's office, and I—well, I accepted the hand and heart of the young man in our set with whom I had had most pleasure in dancing in winter and sailing in summer.

My heart didn't lose a beat and turn over when I saw him coming as did those of the heroines in Marion Crawford's novels, but we were the best friends in the world, and I thought that anything else must be a literary exaggeration, put in to make the story more exciting; just as the heroine's eyelashes were usually exaggerated to the abnormal length of an inch to make her more beautiful, though none of the girls I knew had them like that.

He was a young business man, just starting as

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assistant to his father whose business was an old established, comfortable sort of family affair, big enough to supply, in time, an extra income for an unambitious young couple like ourselves. Every one congratulated us heartily, and I began to embroider towels and hem table napkins and to dream about patterns of flat silver.

The whole arrangement was satisfactory to the point of banality, and I might be quite an old married woman by this time, but—I had a voice.

Nine-tenths of me, at this age, were the normal, rational characteristics of a well-brought up, bright, good looking girl. But the last tenth was an unknown quantity, a great big powerful something which I vaguely felt, even then, to be the master of all the other tenths, a force which was capable of having its own way with the rest of me if I should ever give it a chance. My voice, the agent of this vague power, had developed rather late. It is true that our whole childhood had been coloured by music, that we read notes before we could read letters, and that music was our earliest and most natural mode of expression.

My father's greatest joy in life was music, and he always played imaginative musical games with us in the evenings. The earliest one I remember was when we were tiny tots. He used to improvise on the small organ we had and ask us questions which we had to

## THE WAY IT ALL HAPPENED

answer, singing to his accompaniment. I was Admiral Seymour and Marjorie was General Wolsey.

I remember his singing,

“And how would you get your ships along, Admiral,  
If your sails and oars were shot overboard?”

I sang solemnly,

“I’d shubble them along with shubbles.”

Afterwards when I began to sing from printed music with him I remember saying one evening as he was playing hymns and unfamiliar English ballads for me to sing,

“Papa, please let me look at the music and follow the notes up and down.”

I really began reading music at four years old. We played and sang all our childhood. When Marjorie was seven and I was six we sang Even-song at the village church, as the members of the regular choir were ill or absent. Marjorie had a heavenly childish soprano and I a heavy nondescript voice. But I always pleased my father by singing real “second voice” and not just following the soprano in thirds.

He used to give us a note, and we then had to run round our rather large house humming it. It was the deepest disgrace we ever knew if we had sharpened or flatted when we got back to the starting point. He

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taught us musical terms by making us dance to different rhythms he played, and would call out "Allegro," "Vivace," "Adagio," "Molto allegro," "Legato," and so forth, to which we had to change instantly. Whenever any one came to the house, we played and sang for them, and though it might have been rather awful for the visitors it was very good for us to get used to an audience.

He used to arrange fairy tales like "Bluebeard" in doggerel verses and write accompaniments to them, and we then learned them by heart and rehearsed them, and some grand night played them for all the neighbours. I remember the way we showed Bluebeard's chamber where the heads of his wives were kept. We hung a sheet on the wall and Marjorie and I stood in front of it, with pale faces, closed eyes and open mouths, and our long hair pinned up high above our heads on the sheet. Another sheet was then stretched across us, just below our chins, and the effect was rather ghastly in a dim light. I remember we sang at the last:

"Oh, Bluebeard, oh, Bluebeard,  
Frustrated, checkmated,  
Dissipated, agitated,  
Castigated, lacerated,  
Bluebeard!"

When school was over we always gave a dramatic

## THE WAY IT ALL HAPPENED

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performance; if the weather was fine enough we held them in the big garden that was our childhood's playground. We dressed behind a huge flowering-currant bush, and I can remember a performance of an act of "Twelfth Night," in which I, aged about seven, was *Malvolio*, Lal, my brother, *Maria*, and Marjorie, *Olivia*.

I had always been able to sing, but the sudden growth of my voice was a surprise. One day, in school, we were asked to write a composition on our favourite wish. All the other girls said they wished for curly hair, for pretty dresses, for as much candy as they could eat, for any other frivolous thing that came into their heads. But I took it seriously and told my dearest wish in all the world—a great voice, a voice with which I could make audiences cry or laugh at my will. And, strangely enough, from that time my girlish voice began to grow stronger and stronger, until I could proudly make more noise with it than any other girl in school. Then it grew louder and higher, until it was impossible to ignore such a big possession any longer, and the family decreed that I must have singing lessons.

I took lessons accordingly from an excellent local teacher, practised scales and exercises and later studied the classic songs and arias as seriously as I could, but it was so fatally easy to be interrupted. We were

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all out of school for the first time and enjoying our freedom. It was so much more chic to go down to Huyler's in the mornings, when the girls only a year younger were hard at their lessons, than in the afternoon when the whole girl world was at liberty. I would just begin a morning's work when some one would call me on the telephone to go to the dress-maker's with her, or help arrange the flowers for a dinner party. I loved both flowers and dresses, and it was easy to think, "Oh! I'll practise this afternoon!" and fly off to be gone all day. In the evening there was my fiancé who had to tell me all the absorbing details of his office, or there was a dance, or a theatre party, and I took everything that came my way and enjoyed it all equally. But all the time my voice was really first in my thoughts, and I longed to study seriously and intensely, to arrange my whole life for it and its proper development.

The family, it seemed to me, was more interested in my trousseau than in anything else. They had scraped together five hundred dollars, and I was to have it all, incredible as it sounded, to buy clothes with. Subconsciously all day, and compellingly in bed at night, the thought of what I could do for my voice with that five hundred dollars was with me. I saw myself only as a singer, and knew that I could never be happy unless I were allowed first to get my

## THE WAY IT ALL HAPPENED

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instrument in thorough working order and then to use it. The phrases, "working out your own salvation," "fulfilling your own destiny," "the necessity of self-development," and all those other nicely turned expressions which most students have at their tongues' end, were unknown to me. I just *felt*, inarticulately. But my feeling was strong enough to carry me into action, the step which phrasemakers, who find complete satisfaction in their phrases, often omit.

New York was my Mecca. I talked it all over with my fiancé, told him what a year there would do for me, making it clear that I expected to sing professionally after our marriage. He agreed to everything and promised that I should do as I wished. His possible objection disposed of, only the financial difficulty remained, looming large before me. Deeply and more deeply I was convinced in my own mind that I might marry in old clothes, but not with my voice untrained. I finally summoned courage to propose to my family that I should use the precious five hundred for a year's study in New York instead of a trousseau. Miraculous to relate they agreed, and I was boundlessly happy and saw my path golden ahead of me.

We all spoke and thought of my future as that of a concert singer. My intention of marrying seemed to make anything else out of the question. Indeed,

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at that time, the Metropolitan in New York formed the only oasis in the operatic desert of America. There were spasmodic attempts at travelling companies in English, but no other sign of a permanent institution throughout the length and breadth of the country. I must confess, however, that the operatic bee buzzed considerably at times in the less conspicuous portions of my bonnet. One or two musicians of standing, who heard me sing, pronounced mine "an operatic voice," and strange longings stirred inside me when I saw the Metropolitan singers on the boards.

## CHAPTER II

### A STRUGGLE AND A SOLUTION

**T**HAT winter in New York was a revealing experience to me in many ways. Numbers of things assumed different values in my estimation. One of the first new things I learned was the comparative insignificance of \$500 as a provision for a year's expenses. I lived at one of those boarding houses which are called both "reasonable" and respectable, but are vastly inferior in both comfort and society to the European pension which costs a good deal less. I had lessons in singing, diction and French, all of which counted up to a great many dollars a week. My five hundred began to shrink at an alarming rate, and I don't know what I should have done if a friend had not advised me to try for a "church position," that invaluable means of adding to the resources of a student, which is possible only in America. Besides offering a splendid chance of financial assistance, the church position system is an infallible test of the money value of one's voice. How many girls have I known in Europe embarking

## CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER

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upon the expensive and dreadfully laborious preparation for an operatic career, without possessing a single one of the qualifications necessary to success, without even an adequate, to say nothing of an unusual, voice! Their singing of "Because I love you!" has been the admiration of their local circle, even less musical than themselves, and this little success has been enough to start them on a career, doomed to certain failure. If they had only tried for church positions in a large city in America, had competed in the open market of their own country, they would have been saved a heartbreak and much good money besides.

I won a \$1000 position almost at once, over the heads of many older and more experienced competitors, on the merits of my voice alone. The salary was my financial salvation, but, besides this, my general musicianship was much improved by the practice in sight-reading and *ensemble* singing. I grew used to facing an audience, and found a chance to put into use what I learned in my singing lessons. Blessed be the quartet choir of America, say I; an invaluable institution for the musical sons and daughters of our country.

The church in which I sang had many wealthy members, and the dress-parade on Sundays used to be quite a sight. Our place, as choir, was directly facing the congregation, in a little gallery, so that our

## A STRUGGLE AND A SOLUTION

hats and dresses were subjected to very searching scrutiny. The furnishing of suitable garments for such an exalted position became quite a problem. The soprano was a well-known singer, who, in addition to a good salary, had many concert and oratorio engagements; and her furs and ostrich feathers were my despair. I would sit up half the night to cover a last-year's straw hat with velvet. I made an endless succession of smart blouses which, as we were hidden below the waist by the railing, I wore with the same "utility" black broadcloth skirt. I constructed the most original collars and jabots for them out of odds and ends.

I remember one was made of a packet of silver spangles sewn in rows overlapping each other like fish scales. One of my engagement presents had been a silver mesh bag, and when I wore it at my belt, and the collar round my neck, the choir used to call me "Mrs. Lohengrin." As we took off our outdoor wraps to sing, my smartness in the gallery was assured, but the cleverest manager can't contrive at home a substitute for furs, and the soprano had chinchilla! I was years younger than the others and they were very sweet to me.

Living at my boarding house was a young doctor, who also would have liked to be nice to me. But my exaggerated conscientiousness would not allow me

## CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER

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to have anything to do with one man while I was engaged to another, and I refused all his invitations to the theatre and to Saturday afternoon excursions. My one indulgence was in standing-room tickets for the Metropolitan. What a boon to girls in my situation would be the inexpensive municipal opera and endowed theatres of Germany with their system of *Schule Vorstellungen* (students' performances) of standard plays and operas at prices that put a comfortable seat within the means of even the most humble purse! This was the lack the Century Opera would have supplied.

My church engagement was to come to an end May first. The thought of turning my back on the start I had made depressed me fearfully. I had given my word to marry and did not think of wavering. But the letters of my fiancé and his rare visits to New York had not helped us to understand each other better. Many hours I walked the floor longing for advice, and wrestling with myself. I said to my sister, "I have my foot on the first rung of the ladder and now I must take it off." It all seems so simple now. Almost any other girl would have broken her engagement without much thought. But I had not been brought up that way, and so I had hours and days of misery.

The one thought that comforted me was that I could

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go on at any rate as well as it was possible in my own town, and though it would be much harder to make a career from there, it *could* be done with the co-operation of my husband. It was hard for me to talk in those days, but one day driving down Fifth Avenue in a hansom, a rare treat, I remember my feelings were too much for me, and I burst through my repression and told him how I *must* develop that side of me, and he said, "And I'll help you, little girl; you can count on me." I believed him of course. But while I was dreadfully serious, he, as I learned later, ranked my singing with the china-painting and fancy-work of his relations, as a sort of harmless pastime, to occupy my leisure moments. The truth was, of course, that, as often happens, he had entirely mistaken my character, had made his ideal woman out of his head, given her my outward appearance, and fallen in love with her. The real "me" was a disconcerting stranger, of whom he caught only occasional glimpses.

About the first of May, I returned home. They were all at the station to meet me; my fiancé had even broken into his office hours to be there too. We had seen each other seldom during my absence from home, for New York was a long way off, and he was saving his pennies religiously for the great event. When we married, our income would be a tight fit

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in any case, and I could not help rejoicing that my singing might add considerably to it. There were no \$1000 church positions in our town, but one or two of the churches paid respectable salaries to their quartets, and I hoped soon to begin to make a concert career.

For a little while after my return I was very happy. Every one was so nice to me and seemed to think I had done remarkable things already. Our church asked me to sing a solo the Sunday when the bishop was expected, and I held a sort of reception afterwards and heard many pleasant things about my progress. After my hard work and self-denial, the rest, the gentle flattery, and the comfort of home surroundings were very welcome.

Only with my fiancé things were not so satisfactory. Something, I did not know what, was the matter; but it all culminated one evening in his saying that no married woman should follow a profession, that she should find "occupation enough in her own home." This was really a great shock to me, as he had promised me his support in my work so often. Imagine my surprise after a three years' engagement, when he had his family tell me just three weeks before the wedding that I was to give up all hope of singing professionally after encouraging me in it during the entire time. I knew by then that I could never be

## A STRUGGLE AND A SOLUTION

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happy nor make him happy if I gave up all thought of singing professionally.

I asked him very quietly if those were his convictions, and, on his affirmative answer, I took off his ring, returned it to him, and went upstairs without one more word, feeling as if I had been awakened out of a nightmare, and though still palpitating from the shock was experiencing relief at finding it over. In my own room I stretched my arms above my head and said, "*Free!*" A marvellous vista of freedom opened to me after the months of strain. I could hardly bear to go to sleep; it was so wonderful to plan how I could go ahead and study, study.

The next morning I saw my mistake in supposing the affair to be over, for there ensued many trying days and floods of tears all round. Then came the solemn and awkward returning of all the engagement cups and saucers and knicknacks, to nearly our whole circle of acquaintance. My family stood by me and performed this unattractive task, while I packed up to return to New York.

I had given up my choir, and now found it a difficult matter to get another. All the churches had made their arrangements for the year and the best I could hope for was occasional substituting in case one of the altos was unable to sing. I made the round of the agents' offices. Some heard me and

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were complimentary, some refused as their lists were full. But when I mentioned the word "engagement," I was always met by the rejoinder "No experience." I used to say to them, "But how can I ever get experience if you won't give me a chance?" They would shrug and answer that that wasn't their affair.

It seemed a hopeless deadlock. No one would engage me without experience and no one would give me an opportunity to become experienced. I knew that the one way out of the difficulty was to go abroad and get experience there. I have said that the idea of singing in opera had always made a strong appeal to me, and I knew that I had some of the qualifications necessary for the stage—a big voice, good stage-appearance, and ability to act (we had always acted) as well as a great capacity for hard work. But the essential qualification, without which the others were all ineffective, was the financial support necessary to get me there and to provide means of studying and of living adequately while I prepared myself for opera.

I despaired of obtaining this, but the way was suddenly opened for me in what seemed a miraculous manner. Friends of mine in the church, Frank Smith Jones and his wife, offered to finance me through my years of preparation and for as long afterwards as I might need their aid. These real friends were

## **A STRUGGLE AND A SOLUTION**

behind me for years, and I owe them more than I could ever repay. They made it possible for me to have my sister with me, for me, a rather delicate girl, an inestimable benefit. In the seventh heaven of joy, I prepared to go to Paris to study with Jacques Bouhy, recommended to me by my New York teacher. I packed my few clothes, some songs, and a boundless enthusiasm, and set sail.

## CHAPTER III

### PARIS AT LAST

**I** CROSSED on one of the steady big boats of the Atlantic Transport Line. I remember only one passenger, a boy of even then such personal magnetism that he stands out in my recollection as clearly as any one I have ever met, though he was then only a young fellow and unknown to fame. His name was Douglas Fairbanks and his ambition was to go on the stage. He said as we neared England: "Well, some day we'll read, 'Conried of the Metropolitan Opera House presents Miss Kathleen Howard,' and 'Charles Frohman presents Mr. Douglas Fairbanks.'" His prophecy, which I recall even to the spot on the boat where he made it, and the expression of his eyes which matched mine at that moment, has almost been fulfilled.

I reached Paris in the beginning of September with "my instrument" in working order, with a smattering of French, a letter of credit for \$1000, and a large supply of courage. I found my voice adequate to all my demands upon it, but the money just half

## PARIS AT LAST

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enough (it was increased the next year). As for my courage, I have had to go on renewing that ever since, until it has become the largest factor in my success. Emma Juch told me once that she always said it was not difficult to attain success and make a career. Perhaps her success was made at a time when the competition was less keen, but I at any rate could never agree with her.

I arrived in Paris early in the morning and went to a small hotel in the rue Cambon. It quite thrilled me to ask the chambermaid for *eau chaude* instead of "hot water"; and I felt proud of knowing that the midday meal was called *déjeuner à la fourchette*. I remember that meal to this day—it began with radishes and butter, those inseparable companions in France, went on to omelette, then cold meat and salad, with small clingstone peaches and little white grapes for dessert. Red or white wine was "*compris*," and the bread was a yard long, cut half through into sections, and laid down the middle of the table. It was all half-miraculous to me, and afterwards when I went out to stroll under the arches of the rue de Rivoli I thought myself in fairyland. The jewelry, lingerie and photograph shops delighted me, as they have innumerable tourists, and the name "Redfern" over a doorway gave me a thrill. The Place de la Concorde seemed one of the most beautiful places I

## CONFESSIONS OF 'AN OPERA SINGER

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had ever seen, an opinion which I still hold, by the way, and I felt like a queen when I called an open *fiacre* and drove in state toward the Arc de Triomphe, stopping to buy a big bunch of red roses for twenty cents from a ragged man who ran shouting beside my carriage. In the evening I went to the opera and wondered at the great stairway and at the big auditorium, and still more at the poor performance I saw there but which I accounted for by the fact that September is the dull season.

That first day was all thrills. The next was spent in arranging hours for lessons, and collecting pension addresses from all my acquaintances, as I saw that it would be impossible to do my work in a hotel. I set bravely out on my hunt for a dwelling place. Prices have increased considerably since those days, for at that time it was possible to get very good board and lodging on the left bank of the Seine for five francs a day. My professor, Jacques Bouhy, however, lived near the Arc de Triomphe, and I wished to be within walking distance. I toiled up and down a great many stairs, and peeped into a great many rooms without finding what I sought. I could not bear to wait a day to begin working, and was just a bit discouraged, when I had the good fortune to meet two girls from home, who gave me the address of the pension where they had stayed.

## PARIS AT LAST

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I rushed off at once to see it, and found a very nice house of several floors, situated in a *cité*, a sort of garden behind the first row of houses on the street, so that its windows faced a view of trees and flower-beds with circular gravel walks around them, instead of cobblestones.

The head of the pension was an old woman who looked like a Bourbon but was really a bourgeoisie. It was nearly noon when I arrived, but she was still in a wonderful dressing gown of purple and yellow stripes, with *chaussons*, cloth slippers, on her feet, and an elaborate coiffure of dyed black hair above her yellow old face. She came to me in the salon, a long narrow room with French windows framing tree-tops, the windows and doors all hung with rose-red velvet which looked as if it had been in place since the First Empire. There were sofas of rose, and chairs of the same with black wooden rims, tables and mantel-pieces with thousands of things on them, and an old-fashioned square piano in the corner. Madame was most gracious, remembered the name of her former lodgers, said they were *très gentilles*, turned a neat compliment to the American nation, and showed me the rooms herself.

I chose a back one of good size, nicely furnished and hung with a pretty chintz. It had a *cabinet de toilette*, or large cupboard for washstand and trunks,

## CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER

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opening off it, and I was to have it with complete board, for two hundred francs a month (\$40). The price was really higher, but my arrangement was for the winter. I was to pay extra for light and heat. The room had an open fireplace with a *grille* or fire-basket in it, for which I could buy *boulets*, coaldust pressed into egg-shaped balls, for three francs a sack. Later, I could have had a *salamandre*, one of the excellent small stoves which fit into the fireplace, really warm a room, and require filling only once in twenty-four hours. But I wanted something to poke, and I had an idea that Paris winters were not very formidable. As a matter of fact, anything more penetrating than their damp sunless cold it is impossible to imagine.

For light, there was a huge lamp for which I could buy *luciline*, a kind of highly refined kerosene which has no odour and burns well. I made my bath arrangements with Jean, Madame's old servant, who with his wife, Eugénie, was the real head of the establishment. I had bought a collapsible rubber tub, and Jean was to bring me a big can of hot water every morning. I found that I had to tip occasionally or the water became as cool as Jean's manners. Madame showed me her dining room, and told me with pride that her cuisine was of an excellence renowned. I went to fetch my trunks and hire a piano,

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glad that my long search was over. The piano was a small upright, a tin pan for tone, as are all Parisian pianos *en location*, and it was to cost me ten francs a month, with eight francs for carting. They are more expensive now. When it was installed, my Lares and Penates on top of it, and my music on a stool beside it, I felt that my feet were firmly planted on the ladder leading to success.

Then I began to work. And how I did work that winter! I had two singing lessons a week, and a session with the opera class lasting three hours in which we went through the dramatic action of our rôles. I slaved at my repertoire working three hours a week with a coach, and spending hours and hours a day learning by heart at home. Of course I began with the very biggest rôles—we all do. The personalities of *Amneris*, *Carmen*, *Dalila*, *Azucena* in turn, all in their French version of course, occupied my mind waking and sleeping.

Jacques Bouhy was always kind, grave and courteous with me. The thought of his having created *Escamillo* and his real knowledge of French traditions thrilled me. He lent me his copy of "Samson et Dalila" from which to copy the French words. It had an inscription from Saint-Saens "*À M. Bouhy, grand prêtre et grand artiste.*" He created the rôle of the Grand Priest.

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The only time I ever saw him upset was one day after the Opera class. We all thought him safely out riding as he always was on Mondays. My letter, written at that time to my mother, says:

"This morning in the opera class we had rather an unpleasant time. Little N., with the beautiful tenor voice, has learned in one week the first half of the *Samson* duet for me. He has had to learn it from a score which has only his voice part written in it. He is frightfully down on his luck and with the gorgeous voice and speaking French can't get anything to do, and has no money, not a cent to his name. We had done that, some one else had sung, and having ten minutes left, Valdejo told N. to sing again if he would. He was tired, but jumped up and began the first part of "Faust." He kept forgetting it. Suddenly the door opened and in walked Bouhy as white as a sheet. He commanded N. to stop singing and to learn his things before coming again to the class. Said, why did he sing like a baritone when he was a tenor, mocked him, told him he was ashamed to have such sounds made *chez lui*, that he had been a year on "Faust." What example was he to the others? Every one else had always worked seriously. He stormed for five long minutes, N. standing quite still, with his brown dog's eyes fixed on him—then he left the room. It was frightfully uncomfortable for us

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too. I am sure I have done just such rotten work so it may be my turn next. Of course Bouhy was right. N. has been there a year and ought to know it; but he is just tired out, and never sleeps he says. They say Bouhy is beginning to show his age. This week he bounced his cook whom he has had for years."

I had two French lessons a week, and should have had at least one diction lesson besides, but for an invaluable course which I had taken in New York with the Yersin sisters. These lessons were a nerve-racking experience from which I used to emerge with my feathers all rubbed the wrong way from the strain of trying to imitate the intangible differences between the various French "e's." But I have always been grateful for this rigid training, from the time when I first reached Paris, and, though speaking very little French, could give an address to a *cocher* without having to repeat it, until now, when I can thank my trained ear for a perfect accent in singing foreign languages.

I think no one ever studied more unrelentingly than I, during that first year of hot enthusiasm. I began early in the morning, and the only reason that I did not burn the midnight oil was that I found it cost me too much in kerosene and firing. I could keep warm in bed for nothing, and *boulets* were my pet economy. Coming from a country where a warm room was taken


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for granted, and where the furnaces in hotels and boarding houses might have been supplied by Elijah's ravens for all I knew about it, I just couldn't bear to see my money burning away bit by bit in a grate; and many a time I have put on my fur-lined coat rather than add fuel to the dying heap of dreadfully expensive ashes in the *grille*.

## CHAPTER IV

### PENSION PERSONALITIES

**A**T first I had no companionship and very little recreation, beyond the ever fresh wonder and delight of the Paris streets as I saw them in my daily constitutional. One day I went with a girl friend to visit her *atelier*. I wrote to my mother:



“We spent a long time in the life-class room—nude, (not us but the model). It was a mixed class. A large oblong room, filled with I should think over a hundred students, mostly men. They sat in a circle facing the model throne. The floor is not raised, but the effect of an amphitheatre is produced by rush bottom stools of different heights. They rest their pads or drawing portfolios on a railing in front of them. The room is intolerably hot because of the model. What struck us most was the intense silence and atmosphere of earnestness; no one speaks and there is only the gentle rub-rub of the charcoal, crayon, or pencil against the paper. The students look quickly up and down and never move their glance except from their sketch to the model and back again. She

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was a very pretty young girl and took graceful half-hour poses. The one interruption was a quiet voice at the end of a half-hour, '*C'est l'heure*'; and they stopped for a few minutes' rest. We went into another room, where a picturesque old wretch with long black curls, red velvet waist-coat, long blue cape, well thrown back, black, grimy hands clasped around his knee, and clumsy, rusty boots stuck out in front of him, was seated."

Later one of these old models used to come to my brother. He had a card on which was printed the list of poses he was prepared to take.—"The twelve Apostles," "The Eternal Father" and "The God Jupiter."

I found a little English tea-room about a mile away, and often went there for tea and muffins which in those days were hardly procurable in French places. The tea-habit is only about ten years old in France. The people in the shop soon knew me by sight, which was just as well, as I would begin going over the words of some part in my head and walk out serenely, quite forgetting to pay for my tea. I still go there occasionally when I am in Paris and remind them of that. I sometimes went to the two operas and to the theatre, but not nearly often enough, as I could spare neither time nor money, and the late hours made a concentration on the next morning's

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work more difficult. The concert world was a great disappointment to me. I think I longed for nothing so much that year, as to hear great orchestral music well performed; but the Lamoreux and Chevillard concerts did little to satisfy this craving, and I was amazed at the roughness of the strings and the narrow scope of the programs. Many of the great artists avoided Paris in their tours, the reason given being lack of suitable concert halls.

On the other hand, a whole new school of composition was opened to me that winter by a fellow *pensionnaire*. Charles Loeffler and Henry Hadley spent part of the winter in our pension, and Mr. Loeffler introduced me to the French modernists. Later in the winter we often talked over their works together. He used to stroll into my room about tea time, saying he liked to watch me make tea for I had such attractive fingers. He used to take me to the odd corners of his beloved Paris, *cafés* haunted by long-haired *Sorbonne* students, and *cafés chantants*, where the frank improprieties of the ditties were for me so impenetrably disguised by the *argot* in which they were written that I did not understand a word of them. "When your French gets more colloquial," he used to say, "I shan't be able to bring you here any more. Oh! if you were only a man!" He always ended with this exclamation, and I never knew why, for my woman-

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hood did not seem to disturb him particularly. Perhaps he felt the want of a sort of Fidus Achates to confide in. He took me to two famous places, and this is my description of them in a letter to my mother:

“We went first to the famous ‘Noctambules’ in the Quartier Latin. It is where the wittiest men of their *genre* are to be found. They are many of them decorated by the government. One hears witty topical songs, *chansons d’amour*, and absurdities telling of the eels and fishes in amorous conversation, such extravagances as the French love. There is no vulgarity. Their diction is marvellous, and of course they sacrifice, entirely, their tone to their words. All around the walls are posters and drawings of famous artists and caricatures of Parisians. The performers are called on in turn by the master of ceremonies, and take their stand on a little platform in front of the piano half way up the room. When they have finished, if they have been popular, we are all called on to join in the *doublément* for Monsieur so and so. This consists of clapping to a certain rhythm, which is thumped on the piano: 1 2 3 4 5,—1 2 3 4 5,—1 2 3 4 5—1 2 3—and over again.”

In those days Charles Fallot was still at the “Noctambules” and used to arise, very black and white and thin, and gaze at himself in the big mirror oppo-

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site, while he gestured with his long, skinny arms and thoroughly French hands, and delivered himself of his witty *double entendre chansons*. Another night we went to a famous Montmartre place, Boite à Fursy, but it was not at all the same thing, and we neither of us liked it.

Henry Hadley had the room above me, and often told me my hours of playing "Carmen," etc., nearly maddened him. I always studied in bed or at the piano, without singing, and rarely used my voice when committing rôles to memory. Hadley often had Cyril Scott, the English composer, in his rooms, and I used to listen with joy to Scott's imaginative playing. It was like birds sweeping and swooping, all keys and intervals were interwoven. He always said, one hand on his forehead, "I have no understanding for limitations of harmony or rules of tempo." And indeed why should one have? He liked nothing older than Debussy and was unspeakably bored by Gluck or Beethoven and their ilk, though he loved "Carmen." Hadley still retained a strong admiration for Wagner and respect for the old school, though he much appreciated the moderns and the modern orchestra. I first saw Mary Garden as *Mélisande* with him. We both sat rapt and spell-bound to the end, transported by what was to me a perfect revelation as to scoring for modern orchestra,

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the intangible operatic form, and most of all the subtle imaginative acting of Mary Garden. Her power of suggestion in those days was capable of conveying any shade of thought or delicate mood to the spectator. That performance has always been and will always be an inspiration to me.

Hadley was always starting off on impossible journeys to Egypt and the Orient, in search of "material." His talk was filled with the strangest scraps of out-of-the-way information, like bright-coloured rags in a dust heap. Bauer lived a door or two away, and I used to hear him practising and then hear his concerts. A wordy war would rage at our end of the table at dinner, while old Madame, from her seat of honour in the centre, would cry, "*Mais français, parlez français, mes enfants!*" You crush my ears with your English!" Of course, no attention was paid to her. Joining passionately in the discussions, though not themselves of the *métier*, were two American girls, living on the top floor, who were supposed to be writing a play together. One or another of the composers was usually more or less in love with one or other of the girls, and they took sides accordingly, for and against the recognized masters of the past. The two were amusing, always doing something eccentric.

At one time they had an incubator in their room, the gift of a passing admirer, and we engaged pas-

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sionately in raising chickens. The machine was heated by a huge kerosene lamp, and they were always turning it too high and having it fill the room with blacks and smoke, or letting it go out altogether. However, two or three chicks, more strenuously determined to live than the rest, managed to struggle out at length, and their advent was heralded by the whole pension. We had marked our initials on the eggs, one egg each, and when mine showed the first signs of life, I held it in my hand till it was partly hatched. The little pecks inside the shell were fascinating to feel in one's palm. As soon as the chicks could walk, they were taken downstairs into the *cité*, and their attempts to scratch gravel were hailed by the assembled inhabitants of the garden in a rapture of several languages. One Englishman wanted to make them little jackets, so he could take them for walks in the *Bois*.

Discussion was meat and drink to all these people. Their cry was "Sensations, sensations! Let the artist experience everything in his own person!" This doctrine sounded rather a menace to conduct, but talking endlessly about sensations seemed to be equivalent in most cases to experiencing them. Nevertheless, some of them indulged in desperate orgies of black coffee and cigarettes as an invocation to their muse; and one of the composers assured me that the great symphonic poem on which he was at work, had been

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inspired by breaking a bottle of Houbigant's *Idéal* in a closed cab and driving for hours in the *Bois*, inhaling the perfume. They loved to recount these Gargantuan excesses, and were extravagant in praise of midnight oil, attic windows, and the calm inspiration of early dawn after nights of frantic toil. They were dreadfully sincere, and very amusing to watch, but it seemed to me that there was a great deal of stage setting for very little play. They tended the green shoot of their artistic development with such fantastic care, that it was in danger of dying from too much consideration. Personally, I was too busy, either for sensations or the analysis of them, though I used to wonder what this Paris could be like into which they journeyed and from which they returned full of tales of affairs and lovely women and gorgeous houses. It all seemed most romantic and interesting to me.

The other end of the dinner table represented staid conventionality in contrast to our anarchism. In the centre sat Madame and beside her her life-long friend, the editor of one of the Paris newspapers. Some hinted that he was something more than a friend, in spite of Madame's seventy years. Opposite her, was Madame M——, once an American in the days of long ago, but with no trace of it left except in her persistent accent. She was reputed to possess one hundred dresses, and certainly the variety of her costume

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was amazing; but as she was at least fifty-five and had preserved every gown for the last thirty years, her annual dress expenditure, after all, was probably not extravagant. Her old husband was never allowed a word when she was present, so he revenged himself for the privation by interfering with every game started after dinner in the *salon*—bridge, poker, patience, no matter what it was, he always insisted that the players were quite wrong and that he could show them how it was done in the clubs.

There was a young Russian girl with a pretty face and pretty clothes, whose hands, however, betrayed her peasant origin. Her beautiful sister was engaged at the Grand Opera, so she was an object of great interest to me. There were some Swedes, and nondescript Americans, and a charming French family, a mother and two daughters, bearers of an historic name, who had come up from their *château* in the South of France that the girls might have masters in various "accomplishments," and were living in the *pension* from motives of economy. On Sundays their brother, a young naval officer, used to dine with them. With his pale, aristocratic face, and with little side-whiskers, the high stock of his uniform, his strapped trousers and narrow, arched feet, he was like a John Leech drawing come to life. Then there was a large Frenchwoman, Madame la Marquise de Quelquechose,

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who lent the lustre of her title and her ancestral jewels to our *bourgeois* board. At least, she said her jewels were heirlooms, but her ancestors must have had a prophetic taste in jewelry, as I often saw replicas of her ornaments in the shops of the rue de Rivoli. An old Englishwoman completed our list of permanencies. In spite of twenty years' residence in Paris, she would still ask for "oon petty poo de pang" in a high, drawling voice. There were transients of many nationalities, but these were our regular inmates.

An interesting man sometimes dined with us. Writing my mother about him I say:

"Last night Mr. H—— dined here and told us many yarns about Sarah Bernhardt. He said once when he was in California he was asked to meet her and they all went on a hunting picnic together. She dropped her robe when she got to the island where they had *déjeuner*, undoing a wide, heavy, Egyptian gold and precious-stone belt, and appeared attired in a man's velvet hunting-suit. He says she adores to talk *cancan*, and referred to the manager as 'that *cochon*.' After breakfast, she threw the champagne bottles far into the lake and shot them to pieces at the first shot. The only posey thing she did was when she undid her belt and threw it far across the road, and when he asked her if that was the way she treated

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such beautiful things, she said that the man who gave it to her was domestic! . . . It is colder than charity here at present, at least I feel it so in the house. I shall start my fire today for the first time. Yesterday I bought a bunch of violets, and do you know why? To keep myself from buying chestnuts, which are bad for the voice. You see, if I spent my *sous* for violets I could not afford more for chestnuts. Thus prevented I myself."

## CHAPTER V

### OPERATIC FRANCE VERSUS OPERATIC GERMANY

**A**FTER a few months of strenuous endeavour on my part, I began to be a little dissatisfied and restless. I saw clearly that in a year's time, working at such pressure, I should have a sufficient repertoire to begin my apprenticeship on the stage; but I did not see my way to a *début* quite so clearly. I talked with the other pupils, to get their ideas of progression. They all said, "When I make my *début* at the Opera," or "the Comique." They were all sure of an opening at the top and apparently would consider nothing less than leading rôles in a world capital. That was not my idea at all. I did not care about a *début*. I wanted to learn to act, to do my big parts over and over again before an audience, to sing them into my voice, to learn to make voice, face, and my whole body an articulate expression of all that the rôle had to say.

I tried to find out how the singers of the two operas had made their careers. Some, I learned, though doing leading work, still paid for their performances by taking so and so many francs worth of seats every

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time they sang. Some had gained a hearing by the influence of their teachers. Some were there by "protection." The Russian girl's sister was very beautiful, but she was not very gifted either vocally or histrionically, and I wondered at her engagement, until I heard that she was the *protégée* of a certain rich man. The winners of the first prize at the Conservatoire had a chance given them, and one or two had made good to a certain extent, and still sang occasionally. But, I thought, if the *débutantes* of the Conservatoire must be given an opportunity, there can be very little room for other inexperienced singers, and certainly none for foreigners. The "France for the French" spirit had impressed me tremendously, as it must all foreigners in Paris. Generous as the city is to them, she rightly gives her rewards to those of her own race first.

The opera class was another source of annoyance to me. The one idea was "copy what I show you"—make a faithful imitation whether it expresses what you feel or not; it doesn't matter what you feel so long as you pour everything into the same moulds and turn out neat little shapes, labelled "love," "hate," "despair," all ready for use, and all "true to the traditions of the French school." The first lessons of all were in standing and walking, and there began my sadness. The traditions demanded that one's feet be

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set eternally at "ten minutes to two." Mine would deviate from this rule, and I aided and abetted them in their mutiny. My instinct was to sit down occasionally with my knees together, instead of always draping one leg at the side of the chair. I often felt like singing quite a long phrase with no gestures at all, instead of keeping up a succession of undulating arm-movements.

Our dramatic coach, a fiery individual, who chewed coffee-berries persistently, struggled in vain to teach me to lay one hand on my heart in the traditional manner, two middle fingers together, little one crooked, thumb in. Sometimes mine looked like a starfish, and sometimes like a fist, and both were taboo. Gestures had to melt into each other; there were different ones for different emotions, and woe betide you if you mixed them! There was a sort of test speech beginning, "*Moi, qui vous parle.*" The hand at "*moi*" had to be laid upon the chest in the approved manner. I have forgotten the middle, but the end was, "*Et je vous jure, que je le ferai jamais!*" At *jure* one elevated the right hand, the first two fingers raised, and at *jamais* the right arm described a figure eight across the upper half of the body, with the gesture of tearing away a long beard. We did this all winter and never reached perfection, that is, an exact copy of Valdejo, our instructor.

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We had to practice the classic walk—slowly advancing, foot dragging, stomach out, very lordly to see, one arm bent from the elbow with the forearm and hand resting against the body—a most difficult thing. The different versions were very comic, but the idea was excellent and I used it later in “Orfeo.” Certainly a pulled back tummy would not be in character in a Greek tunic.

Later, we had to act scenes from our operas, and there I got on better. I used to get absorbed in the character to the extent of becoming perfectly oblivious of my surroundings. I remember once, as *Dalila*, throwing myself so hard upon the supposed couch of *Dalila*, that I thumped my head on the marble mantel behind me. My watching class mates burst into a snicker, and I into real tears of anger, not of pain. I had entirely forgotten them when their giggles wrenched me back into the present; but their great pride was never to forget themselves and always to be ready to imitate the coach in cold blood. He, however, appreciated that I had something in me, and used to thump me on the back, and call me “Canaïlle!” when I did anything that pleased him—a curious expression of approval.

I am not denouncing the ordinary “opera class.” This method of slavish imitation doubtless has its usefulness for some people. The old order of opera

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singer was often trained by such schooling. But Mary Garden had opened my eyes to the new order of singing actors, and the old method was no help to me. I longed for a real stage on which to try out my own ideas, and find by experience whether they were right or wrong. I wanted to gain that subtle quality, "authority," which is nearly as important as voice itself, that routine which makes one forget the four long bones of the body, and blends all its members into an instrument of expression, homogeneous and harmonious.

In my researches into the life-stories of French singers, I heard much of "the French provinces" as a training school, and turned my attention to accumulating all the information on that subject that I could gather. I heard tales of southern audiences who cheered their singers to the echo, waited in a mob to tear the horses from their carriages after a performance, pelted them with flowers and expressed their approval in other picturesque fashions. The reverse side of these tales is of directly opposite character, when benches are torn up and flung over the gallery by the "gods," disappointed at not hearing a favourite singer, and the head of the unlucky substitute is the target for their missiles till he makes good with a high note loud enough to pierce the din of their protestation. If a wretched singer clears his throat

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loud enough to be heard, he will be greeted at each entrance by a chorus of throat-clearing from the gallery. If his acting of a part strikes them as being pretentious or over-solemn, groans and cries of "Shakespeare-r-r-e" reward his efforts. To crack on a high note is the certain signal for a riot of yelling and jeers, but the unhappy singer must stick it out at any cost, for if he leaves the stage, they wait for him outside and set upon him bodily.

"If you've made the round of the Provinces," as Harry Weldon, who has done so, once said to me, "you can sing in Hell!"

Of course, not all provincial audiences are so "temperamental" as the southerners, but, as far as I could learn, paid performances and protection seemed to exist everywhere in greater or less degree. The repertoire was limited and old-fashioned—the standard French operas, "Faust," "Mignon," "Carmen," "Hamlet," were performed, with "Traviata," "Travatore," "Aida," "The Barber," some Meyerbeer, and many of the lighter works, like "La Fille du Regiment." Among the more modern works were "Werther" and "Manon" of Massenet, with "Bohème" and "Butterfly" and perhaps "Louise." "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser" were sometimes given, but the big Wagner dramas, the classics of Mozart, Weber and Gluck, and the moderns like Debussy, Dukas, Strauss, Humper-

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dinck, seemed neglected. Over all there hung a general lack of method, musical thoroughness and discipline. I must confess that I judge largely by hearsay, as the only provincial French opera house of which I have any personal knowledge is that of Nancy. So it may be that I do "The Provinces" an injustice. Of course, both Monte Carlo and Nice offer many novelties. But then Monte Carlo is not a provincial French opera at all.

On the other hand, the stories I heard of the great operatic machinery of Germany began to attract me irresistibly. The organized system of opera, the great chain of opera houses, the discipline of their rigid schooling, the concentration and deep musical sincerity of their musicians, the simplicity of German life, all seemed to offer what I was looking for. The dramatic quality of my voice would have more scope in their more varied repertoire, while surely in their hundred-odd opera houses I might find a place to work out my ideas in peace.

Every one thought me crazy. My teachers tried their hardest to dissuade me, promising me a great career in France. But I felt a call to Germany where I hoped to find the right conditions for my own development which seemed lacking in France. The great barrier was the language—the difficulty of singing in it, to say nothing of learning it, for I did not know

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one word. Jean de Reszke said to me later, speaking of German as a language for singing: "*Avec cette langue, vous n'arriverez jamais.*" (With that language, you will never succeed.) However, I have said that I had a good deal of courage in those days, and I determined to go to Berlin to try my luck.

Not that I was tired of Paris. It is still my favourite city offering a wonderful opportunity for broadening culture to those who can get into touch with its art life. I owe it a great debt for deepening my artistic perception, and developing that sense of true proportion which keeps one from exaggeration on the one hand and pedantry on the other. But I should not recommend Paris as the best school for the ordinary American student of singing, who has no opportunity to penetrate into real French life. There is no lack of sincerity in the real French institutions, the Conservatoire, the schools of art, the Sorbonne—there are found concentration, competition, and keenness enough. But the foreign student of singing does not ordinarily come into contact with these institutions. In the Paris vocal studios, as I know them, there is a dissipation instead of a conservation of energy. The students expect to win the crown without running the race, and money and influence play too great a rôle. They (vocal students, I mean) tend to exaggerate their little emotions into *grandes passions*, and

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hold the most disproportionate views of their own importance. I do not mean to say that I agree with a certain singer who brought back harrowing tales of immorality among American students in Europe. Amongst all the hundreds of vocal students I have known, I never met one case of flagrant misbehaviour. In general the girls live quietly and strive according to their lights, though there is not one in twenty with resolution enough to concentrate on the hard work necessary for a great career. The temptation is to fritter away both time and money on the things that don't matter.

## CHAPTER VI

### PREPARING RÔLES IN BERLIN

THE first of September, without a word of German, I set out for Berlin. My mother had come over during the preceding Spring, to make her home in Paris with my sculptor brother Cecil and my sister. From this time on I went to them for the summers, and my sister joined me when I went to Metz, and has never left me since. It made it harder to leave both family and Paris behind and go into an unknown land, but I felt it to be the best way.

Lilli Lehmann's studio was my objective point. I found her address in a musical journal, and armed with that, and the address of an inexpensive *pension*, I took the train. Arrived in Berlin, I took a *Droschke*, directing the driver to my pension by showing him the street and number on a piece of paper. Somewhere between that *Droschke* and my room, my travelling clock got lost, and what a time I had to recover it! The apple-cheeked maid knew of the

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existence of no other language beside her own. In vain I made a pendulum of my finger and tirelessly repeated "tick, tick"—no gleam of intelligence dawned in her Prussian blue eyes.

The first few days brought a series of disappointments. The Lehmann idea had to be abandoned. She was out of town and recommended me by letter to a certain Herr —, to whom she was sending every one who applied to her. I found him a dear old man indeed, but one who had nothing to say to me on the subject of voice production which I had not heard already. However, I decided to begin the study of German repertoire with him, painstakingly re-learning the operas I already knew in French, and adding the new ones required for a German engagement. Later I found a good *répétiteur*, who knew the operas thoroughly, quite sufficient and much cheaper, as he charged only four marks (\$1.00) an hour. I studied the words of my rôles with Herr —'s wife, who had been an actress and a good one, and who laid the foundation of what I am proud to say is now a perfect German accent. These lessons were five marks an hour and were quite worth it. I would learn a rôle by heart, sentence by sentence, looking up every word in the dictionary and writing in the translation over the German, spending hours in fruitless search for a past participle which

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did not look as if it belonged to its infinitive, the only part of the verb, of course, to be given in the dictionary! Then, sentence by sentence, I would go over it with Frau —, repeating each word after her, sometimes twenty times! We also used those splendid books, known I found afterwards to every German actor, in which paragraphs of words with the same vowel sound or combination of vowel and consonants are given to be repeated over and over again. Besides this drudgery, I had German lessons for four months (at three marks or seventy-five cents) for which I had to translate and write exercises. All the labyrinths of the declension of articles, nouns and adjectives in three genders and plurals, lay before me to be explored. The datives and accusatives haunted my dreams by night, and by day I was reduced to the sign language.

I had left my first pension, and crushing down the temptation to live in one of the big, gay German-American pensions, where justice is tempered with mercy, so to speak, I moved myself and my piano into a real German one, where I was the only alien. It was one floor of a large house in a quiet side street—the top floor, and no elevator! I climbed eighty-seven steps by actual count every time I came home from a lesson. I had a huge room, heated by steam, with board for four marks a day. The meals were

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*echt Deutsch*. Breakfast was set ready on the dining-room table at some unearthly hour, and the guests went in and helped themselves when they chose. The coffee and hot milk were kept warm over little alcohol flames, and there were delicious Berlin rolls and the best of unsalted butter. Dinner was at two, and was good in its plain way. We had some North German dishes which one had to learn to enjoy, like olives. Hot chocolate soup I grew quite fond of, but beer soup, sorrel soup, and cabbage soup with cherries in it were never exactly intimates of mine. One dish of baked ham with dumplings and hot plum jam sounds strange, but improves on acquaintance; *Pumpernickel*, and *Schmierkaese* are better than their names, and *Kartoffelpuffen mit Preisselbeeren* (potato cakes with cranberries) are delicious. We had good plain puddings and black coffee for dessert every day, and quite wonderful roast Pomeranian goose and *Eistorte* with whipped cream on Sundays. Supper was at eight, and the menu was certainly a model for the simple life. Bread and butter with slices of sausage and cold ham, sometimes big dishes of roast chestnuts instead of cold meat, or potatoes in their jackets, or some of the endless variety of North-German cheeses—to drink, tea or beer, and that was all.

My fellow pensionnaires were nearly all teachers,

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or students preparing to be teachers. They all spoke German and nothing but German, and, at first, I used to think my mind would drown in the overwhelming floods of it that assailed my ears. Gradually it came to sound like individual words and phrases, and soon I dared occasionally to launch a small conversational barque upon it, avoiding the disastrous rocks of gender as skilfully as possible, though often at first, by the time that my genders and cases were all arranged for a sentence, the subject had changed, and I could not use it. We had a Fräulein Lanz, Fräulein Franz, and Fräulein.Kranz, four or five other Fräuleins and no males at all.

Another American student of singing came to live there, and in the evening we used to go to the opera or to concerts together. Everything begins early in Berlin, and those who had tickets for some entertainment missed the eight o'clock supper. So plates of *belegte Broedchen* (rolls with cold meat) would be set out for them on the dining-table, and all the others would be sitting there with their needle-work, and would demand "*Nun, wie war es?*" when we came in. On Saturdays the evening paper announced the program at the opera for the week, and we could hardly wait to look at it. The cheaper seats are in great demand. Students wait for hours, sometimes from earliest dawn, outside the box office on Sunday morn-

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ings when the sale for the week begins. We had an arrangement with the keeper of a little fruit and vegetable shop, to save ourselves the wait. We would decide what we wished to see and go over to his shop on Saturday evening to order the seats from him. He then went down early enough to secure the front row in the top gallery for us at two marks fifty, and we paid him twelve cents for his trouble. Sixty-two cents is quite a high price in comparison to those of the rest of the Opera House, for the orchestra chairs cost only eight marks. The top gallery is vast, and the back rows are much cheaper, but the authorities show their sense in keeping up the price of the front rows and I don't think there is ever an empty seat there. To concerts we were often admitted free, on saying that we were students, unless the artist was a great favourite, and in that case we could buy standing room, or seats in the gallery for one mark. We always went and came home in the street cars, paying the two cent fare with a one cent tip to the conductor, and dressing in our ordinary street clothes, with scarves over our hair. I used to go alone sometimes, and was never spoken to or molested in any way. No one looked at you twice, unless you looked at him three times.

On Sundays I would take a day off, and, in true German fashion, make an expedition; in bad weather

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to some museum or picture gallery, in Autumn or Spring to some out-of-door restaurant. Sometimes I was too tired to go further than the *Tiergarten*. Then I would stroll gently across it and have coffee and cakes at the *Zelt*, or big open-air refreshment gardens where the band plays. They are the resort of *hoi polloi* of Berlin in countless family groups: the father rather fat with hirsute adornments, the mother also rather massive, and their plump children, all drinking beer out of tall glasses and mugs, or coffee in inch-thick white cups, and eating wedges of highly decorated *Torte*, with or without the addition of heaped-up whipped cream.

If I felt more strenuous, I would take a car out to the Grunewald, a villa-colony suburb, with roads winding through pine woods. I would sit under the trees and invite my soul. As I sat there, some girl or boy's school would come trooping by, singing a *Volkslied* of interminable verses, in four parts, having tramped all day for the pure joy of motion in the open air. Then I would have coffee and a triangle of cherry pie, and what cherry pie! at the *Hundekehle*, an immense restaurant on the border of a small lake, accommodating I don't know how many fat Prussians at once with refreshments. Every German town has some such resort, where inexpensive creature comforts are the reward of a long walk. Such an ex-

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pedition of the whole family is their greatest treat, and one in which they have the sense to indulge as often as possible. Even on week day afternoons the housewives find time for a stroll, a reviving cup of coffee, and a little gossip, though of course that is not the same thing as going *en masse* with Hans and the Kinder. Of course, this was long before the war.

## CHAPTER VII

### MY FIRST OPERATIC CONTRACT SIGNED

**B**Y the first of December I had broken the back of the German declensions, understood a good part of an ordinary conversation, and had painfully acquired three or four rôles in German. The gadfly of my ambition began to torment me again, and I determined to look for a "job."

Students often ask me "How did you get your first engagement?" This is how. I went to see the best agent in Berlin, Herr Harder, a man of the highest reputation for fair dealing, who was the recognized head of his profession. Opinion as to the agent's powers of usefulness is divided among singers. Some maintain that they have made all their good engagements independently, others tell you that you are safe only in the hands of a reputable agent. I have closed contracts in both ways. The agent is not omnipotent. It is his business to watch the operatic field and notify you when there is a vacancy that he thinks would suit you. He is apt to know first where such vacancies are likely to occur. Directors who are looking for singers sometimes go

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straight to their favourite agent. Then he, the agent, sends you word that Herr Direktor So and So will be at his Bureau on such a day to hear singers. When you respond, you may find yourself the only contralto among many other voices, or you may find yourself one of six or seven all wanting the same engagement. The agent keeps contract blanks in his office, and when he hears of a vacancy in an opera house, he fills in a blank with your name, the name of the theatre, and tentatively the salary he thinks they will pay, and sends it to you. You sign it if it suits you, and return it to the agent. This is really nothing more than a notification that there is, or will be, such a vacancy, and is not worth the paper it is written on. American girls, who do not understand this, will tell you that they have "been offered Berlin, or Vienna, or Munich," when they have merely received one of these *Agenten-Verträge*. A contract is worth nothing as such, until it is countersigned by the director of the opera house, and yourself as singer. Even then, it is not valid until you have sung as many "trial performances" at the opera house as the contract calls for, and for which you may have to wait six months.

I told Herr Harder what I wanted—a chance to do big rôles somewhere, salary no particular object, as I should look upon the experience as the completion of my training. I sang for him, left with him

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my repertoire and photographs, and he promised to let me know of the first opportunity that presented itself. In a short time, he sent for me to come and see the Director of the Theater des Westens, a Berlin theatre which at that time was the home of a sort of popular opera. I sang for the manager, and he was very complimentary. He offered to engage me at once, but he added, curiously enough, that I was too good for him! They gave only the older operas like "Trovatore," on which the copyright had expired, and of these only the ones which the Hofoper did not give, so that I should have no chance to sing my big parts. At the same time, he said he would very much like to have me. The offer did not suit my plans, and I decided to refuse it. I went on with my work until just before Christmas, when Herr Harder made me a second proposal. This was the position of first contralto in the garrison town of Metz in Alsace-Lorraine. The opera was a municipal one, that is it was subsidized by the town, they played a season of seven months, and gave a large repertoire including some of the Ring dramas. I was to go down there, sing for the management, and if they liked me, begin my engagement the following September, giving me time to make additions to my German repertoire. As I was a beginner of course I could not give the usual guest performances.

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*Vorsingen* is a trying ordeal. The great theatres have regular days for hearing aspirants, but this was a small theatre. The appointment is usually made on the stage, sometimes during, sometimes just after a rehearsal. Groups of the singers regularly engaged in the opera house stand in the wings, and you feel a nameless hostility emanating from all of them, especially from the one whom you are going to try to supplant. The theatre is like a cavern, and the acoustic is of course totally unknown to you. Two or three pale spots down in the orchestra chairs indicate the whereabouts of the director and perhaps the stage manager and first Kapellmeister who have come to hear you. The overhead "rehearsal lights" are very unbecoming and you are quite conscious of it. If you are to sing with orchestra, the conductor presents you to the players, "*Meine Herren, Fräulein* ——" You bow, and your insides slip a few inches lower. My first *Vorsingen* was with the piano. It stood at one side of the stage, and a whipper-snapper of a third Kapellmeister dashed more or less accurately into the prelude of the second aria from "Samson et Dalila."

Then came a momentous interview in the Director's office. I had sung such good German, thanks to Frau —, that he had no idea that I understood only about three words in five of what he said. For form's

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sake he kept saying, "*Sie verstehen mich, Fräulein?*" and when I answered "*Ja*," he was satisfied. His wife, who thought she spoke English, was present, and tried to say a great deal, but my German proved the more serviceable of the two. I gathered that I was offered a two season contract, to sing the leading contralto parts, at the princely salary of 150 marks a month! (about \$35). There was no *Spielgelt*. Salaries are usually divided into so much per month down, and so much per performance, the number of performances per month guaranteed; that is, one is paid for a certain number whether one sings them or not, and any performances over and above this number are paid extra. If a performance is lost by one's own fault, through illness for example, the *Spielgelt* for that performance is forfeited. Three days absence from the cast through illness, even though one may be scheduled to sing only once during those days, is counted as one *Spielgelt*.

Illness is, in fact, almost a crime. In addition to losing your money, you have to have witnesses to prove that you are really ill, for theatre directors in Germany are a suspicious lot and take nothing for granted. If you wake on the morning of a performance with laryngitis, that dread enemy of the voice, or if you fall downstairs on your way to the theatre and sprain your ankle, you must notify the theatre

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before a certain hour in the day, perhaps ten or twelve, or four o'clock, that you cannot sing that night. Your word for it alone won't do. Every theatre has special doctors on its list, and you must call in one of these, whether he is your regular physician or not. He makes an examination and gives you a signed statement that you are unable to appear, adding, if the disorder be serious, how many days it will be in his opinion, before you can return to work. It often happens that the man most experienced in treating your illness, the best throat specialist in town, for example, is not on the books as "Theater-Arzt," and then if you wish to be treated by him, you sometimes have trouble with the theatre doctor. In the theatre in which I was first engaged, I had a disagreeable experience of this kind. I was ill with bronchitis, and sent word to the theatre the day before, that I should not be able to sing *Marta*, in "Faust," on the night scheduled for it. I had already committed the deadly crime of illness once before that season, and this time my defection was particularly annoying to the management because they had to get a guest for "Faust" anyway, and they would be forced to send posthaste for another to sing the *Nurse*. Their irritation with me was equalled, if not surpassed, by that of the regular theatre doctor, whose professional honour had been outraged the last time

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by my insistence upon the services of a very clever throat specialist who lived in the town, and whose aid I had had the bad taste to prefer to his own. Between them, I was the corn between the upper and nether millstone. Next day the theatre sent word that they would accept nothing but a certificate from their own doctor, and the doctor shortly after appeared at my bedside. I could hardly speak out loud, but managed to whisper a request that he would write me an "*Attest*" for three days. To my surprise he began to hem and haw, and finally stammered out: "There is really no reason in my opinion, why you shouldn't sing this evening!" I was so furious I saw red. I sat up in bed, and whispered savagely:

"You say I can sing tonight! Very well, get out of my room, and I'll go to the theatre and sing this evening, with my voice in this condition, and *you* will be responsible for the consequences!" He got up, twisting his hat in his hands, and stammering something. I simply fixed my eyes on him, and fairly glared him out of the room. Then I dressed like a hurricane and rushed to the director's office.

"I have come to sing *Marta*," I announced hoarsely.

"Oh! *liebes Fräulein*——" began the director, positively scared by my pale face and furious eyes, "*Of course* we don't want you to sing when you are so

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hoarse. Doctor —— was quite mistaken; please go home and take care of yourself. We'll get a guest for the *Nurse* at once!"

"Very well," I said, "I will go home if you say so; but remember Doctor —— says I can sing, and I am ready to do so on his responsibility."

I went back after my illness to see the director, who to my surprise began to attack me violently about my absence. He stormed, and thumped the desk, and would listen to nothing I said. I tried to tell him he had no right to speak to me in that way, as I had really been ill, and had always done my duty when well. He raved back that I had *not* done my duty, and it seemed to me so futile to argue, that I walked out without answering and left him raving. I went home and stayed there for five days, and at the end of that time the director sent his secretary "to explain" and ask me to return to my duty. It was an awkward interview for him, poor man, so I let him off easily, graciously accepted the somewhat disguised apology, and, as I was quite recovered and eager to sing again, signified my willingness to appear the following night.

To return to my first contract.—There was a formidable list of rôles which I must agree to have ready, and the director also insisted on my studying with a certain well-known woman teacher in Berlin!

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I conveyed to him as well as I could, that I would settle all this with my agent, as I had no intention of agreeing to all of it, and was afraid to trust my German to say so diplomatically. He added, "Of course you are too good for us, Fräulein." This was the second time I had been told I was too good for an engagement. Every one seemed to think I ought to aim at a secondary position in one of the big opera houses, rather than a leading one in a smaller place. The prospect of singing pages or confidants in a capital city, with perhaps one good rôle in a season, did not meet my needs at all; but no one seemed to sympathize with my ideas. I wanted to make a career in Germany, as if I were a German singer, having my own recognized place in the opera house in which I was engaged, singing the big rôles by right, without intriguing or fighting for them.

On returning to Berlin, I wrote to Herr Harder that I would learn a certain specified number of rôles in addition to those I already knew, making about twelve in all, and ignored the singing-teacher proposition altogether as I had formed the intention of going to coach with Jean de Reszke. On these terms the contract was returned to me signed by the director, and I was engaged.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MY ONE LONE IMPROPOSITION

“**W**HEN I make my *début*” was the phrase that I had heard so often on the lips of my American fellow students. Each one had chosen her opera house, and decided in which rôle she would dazzle a clamouring public. Sometimes one more modest would choose Monte Carlo in preference to Paris, or if she intended to make a career in Germany, she might hesitate between the rival merits of Dresden and Berlin. But that the theatre should be one of the half-dozen leading ones in the world, and the rôle her favourite, were foregone conclusions before she left America.

In this respect, I quite shattered the tradition of the prima donna, for I sang my first part in a small provincial German opera house, at twenty-four hours’ notice, and it was one of those which I have least pleasure in singing. I remember that a well-known American writer, living in Paris, said patronizingly to my mother *à propos* of my first appearance, “Let us hope that she will make a real *début* later, for this



I CARMEN AS I COULD TO MEET IT



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can hardly be called one, can it?" "Well, after all," answered my mother, "who knows where most of the great singers of today made their débuts?"

Contemporary fiction is full of opera singing heroines who jump into fame in a single night, like Minerva springing full armed from the head of Jupiter. Well, perhaps some of them do so—but I have never met a singer, even of the highest international reputation, who has not had some dark checkers of disappointment in his career. All his clouds may have had silver linings, but sometimes the silver gets mighty tarnished before he succeeds in struggling through the cloud, and sometimes another singer gets through first and steals the silver outright. I cannot say that I have ever been in great danger morally on the stage, but my courage, my nerve, has been sometimes severely threatend, and I have needed to summon the most dogged determination to keep it from failing altogether. I feel sure that all successful singers share my experience in greater or less degree, especially those who have been trained in foreign countries. Not all of them, by any means, have been through as severe a school as mine; few American singers at any rate, have made a career in a foreign country exactly as if they had been a native of it. Many have been engaged for special rôles in one of the larger opera houses, and after several years of experience, have

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sung but a few parts, all of which have been those most suited to them. I have sung, on the contrary, the entire repertoire of a typical German opera house, where operas are regularly given of which the Metropolitan audience has never even heard.

In my first season, I sang in all fifteen different rôles in the first seven months of my career. I have appeared in eighty-five, ranging from the Wagner music dramas to the "Merry Widow" and singing many of the rôles in three different languages. It has been "the strenuous life" in its severest form, but I do not regret any of it, nor feel that my effort has been wasted, for I know that I understand my *métier*, comprehensively and in detail, and nothing can take away the satisfaction of that.

The beginning of the season found my sister and myself in the town of Metz, as according to contract we had arrived six days before the opening. The weather was hot and dusty, and the town seemed deserted, for the regiments which gave it life and colour was still away at the Autumn manœuvres. We felt very forlorn at first, strangers in a strange land with a vengeance, and without the least idea of what the immediate future might hold for us. My German had improved considerably since my interview with the director, but my sister did not know one word. Luckily for her there was almost as much French

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spoken in the town as German. There were many shops of absolutely French character, where she was treated with great consideration as coming from Paris. Even the officials of the town, the post office employés, custom officers, and others with whom she came in contact, though rather deaf in their French ear, would make shift to understand her if necessary, adding an extra touch of rigidity to their already sufficiently severe manner, in order to nip any "French familiarity" in the bud.

We went to the hotel that had been recommended to us, as the principal one in the town was in the process of reconstruction and swarmed with plasterers and carpenters. It was rather a dreadful place, with enormous dark rooms, dingily furnished with heavy old-fashioned furniture; but it was very near the theatre and as we meant to find lodgings later, we tried not to be depressed by its gloominess.

Of course, the first thing we did was to visit the theatre. To reach it one crossed a bridge over the river, picturesquely bordered with old overhanging houses, then a cobblestone "Platz," and there, rather shabby but still quite imposing, it stood. On the way I read my name for the first time on a German poster, with a distinct thrill. I knew my way to the stage-entrance, and through it to the Direktor's Bureau, where several shocks awaited me. I learned

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that the man who had engaged me had been superseded by a new one, who had not yet arrived. Matters were in charge of the stage manager, a huge, towering creature, with a great bass voice, who was a rather remarkable actor. He had come down in the world, having begun life as a cavalry officer, and he had strange gleams of the gentleman about him, even then. He was, by the way, the one man in the profession who ever made me a questionable offer. He grew to admire me very much as time went on, and one day, after I had been there some time, he asked me to sign a further contract with the theatre.

"You'll never get anything very much better," he said, "as you are a foreigner. We'll make a good contract with you, and perhaps, later—who knows?—you may have a 'protection salary.'"

He paused to see the effect of his proposal, and was met with absolute non-comprehension on my part, as I really did not understand, at the time, the German words he was using. He dropped his proposal there and then, and the affair had no unpleasant consequences for me, as he never referred to it again. And that is the single instance of that sort which I have encountered. Nevertheless, I might possibly have had further trouble with him, for my appearance really seemed to appeal to him very much, later in the winter. Just before Christmas, however, he died, al-

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most overnight, as we were in the midst of rushing a production of "Trompeter von Säkkingen." He had informed me on Friday night that I should have to sing the *Countess* on the following Tuesday. I did not know a word of it, and was on the way on Saturday morning to get the score, when I heard that he was dangerously ill—and by Sunday morning he was dead. Poor man! he had some good qualities and real talents, but it turned out that he was a great scoundrel and had been robbing the direction left and right, under the pretence of assisting the new director.

This new director, who had never even heard my voice, had been a well-known Wagnerian singer in his day and intended to take some of the principal baritone rôles in his new position, to the intense disgust of the regular *Heldenbariton*. All the outstanding contracts had been taken over in his name. This sudden change of management, during vacation time, made a little trouble for me as it happened. None of the present staff had heard me sing. They knew only that I was a foreigner without experience, heard that my conversational German was not yet perfect (a much rarer accomplishment than a perfect accent in singing), and therefore doubted my ability to do the work of the first contralto. So they had engaged a native, which meant that it was "up to me" to prove myself capable at the first opportunity or lose the

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chance of doing first rôles or perhaps be dismissed altogether.

Our hotel was impossible for a long stay, and, of course, after my Berlin experience, my first idea was a good German pension. We went to the *Verkehrsverein*—the Information Bureau which is a feature of all German towns, and asked for a pension address. The man in charge shook his head. There was only one such place, he said, and he feared that it would not suit us, but we might go and see. We went accordingly, and found a nice-enough looking house in the newest quarter, quite the other side of the town from the theatre. The inside of the house, however, told its own story—concrete floors, whitewashed walls with garish religious prints on them, and deal furniture with red and white table covers much in evidence. The bedrooms were cell-like and garnished with mottoes, while a Bible and candlestick by each bedside were the only other decorations.

“What is this institution?” we asked.

“It is the German Young Ladies Evangelical Home, for Protestants only,” we were told.

We thanked the Matron, and decided that we were neither German, Evangelical nor young enough for such a home, even though we might be ladies and Protestants.

Disappointed in our hope of finding a pension, we

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returned to our friend of the Information Bureau, this time to ask for addresses of furnished rooms with a decent landlady to attend to them for us. He shook his head once more—it was very difficult in a garrison town, he said, to be certain of the character of a house which had furnished rooms to let.

“But where do the artists of the theatres usually live?” we asked.

“Oh! they either take furnished rooms, or bring their own furniture,” he answered, “or live in the smaller hotels. But then they are Germans and used to judging in such cases. There is, however, an English lady living here who knows the town thoroughly, and you had better go to her and get her to find rooms for you.”

As we felt that we could not possibly ask a totally unknown Englishwoman to find lodgings for us, my sister set out on the hunt alone. As a foreigner speaking no German, and a woman looking for rooms all by herself, she was received in a very curious manner by most of the landladies she visited, and evidently looked upon with strong suspicion. We were getting desperate, as the time of my *début* was coming nearer and nearer and we were still unsettled. Finally we resolved to throw ourselves upon the mercy of the unknown Englishwoman after all, and wrote her a note begging her assistance in finding two furnished rooms

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near the theatre, with a *Hausfrau* who would look after them and serve our breakfast. We had to find a furnished apartment as we were not like some of my colleagues who possess their own furniture and pass their lives in a sort of singing journey through the country, always surrounded by their own household gods.



CARMEN AS I NOW DRESS IT



## CHAPTER IX

### THE MAKINGS OF A SMALL MUNICIPAL OPERA HOUSE

**E**ARLY the next morning, before we were up, our English friend kindly came to see us, and with her help we soon discovered just what we were looking for, in an eminently respectable house, where the *Hausfrau* was the wife of a policeman, so that we were under the shadow of the majesty of the law.

A young doctor had the rooms, but she assured us that he was moving immediately, and that we might send our trunks the following day. We duly arrived the next afternoon with an avalanche of baggage and found that the poor young man had had no intention of leaving before the end of the month and had even invited guests for that very evening! Floods of German ensued between him and the *Hausfrau*, while we sat philosophically on our trunks in the hall and waited. Presently she emerged, rather heated of countenance, to say that it was all arranged, and to begin moving our things into the bedroom. The doctor

## CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER

called us into the sitting-room, waived aside our explanations and thanks for his gallantry, and shutting all the doors mysteriously, proceeded to the only revenge in his power—to defame the character and impugn the honesty of our future hostess.

“Keep things locked, I warn you, keep them locked!” he repeated earnestly, all the while cramming books, bottles and garments promiscuously into a trunk.

We made allowances for his need of reprisal, and took his warning with a grain of salt; and as a matter of fact our landlady never touched anything of ours except what she doubtless considered her proper “commission” levied upon our coal and kerosene. She was quite satisfactory on the whole, except that she *would* quarrel very noisily with her policeman from time to time, or rather he with her. When we remonstrated and said that we could not stand it and that she shouldn’t, she answered that she would be only too glad to get out of her bargain, but that she had put her money into this marriage and therefore had to stay in it!

Her small boy was named Karl, but she always called him “Schweinsche’.” She had a few wisps of greyish drab hair wound round a sort of steering-wheel of celluloid in the back. On Christmas my sister hunted for hours for a present for her, and

## A SMALL MUNICIPAL OPERA HOUSE

finally returned with a magnificent set of rhinestone-set haircombs. I have always wondered what the poor woman did with them, as her hair could not have covered an eighth of their prongs.

The reason for the summary dismissal of her former tenant was, of course, the extra money that she made out of our being foreigners who did not know the tariff, and the fact that there were two of us to be served. We paid sixty marks, fifteen dollars, a month for the rooms, service and breakfast of coffee and rolls, and little as this seems, I don't suppose the doctor had paid a penny over forty. Our colleagues thought us spendthrifts and gullible foreigners, as they paid about thirty marks and got their own breakfast.

My sister had two chafing dishes on which she cooked our supper, but the two o'clock dinner was a problem. I was too tired after the strenuous morning rehearsals beginning at ten o'clock, and the strain of trying to follow all the directions I received in German, to go to the Hotels or restaurants for dinner, as most of my colleagues did. Our landlady suggested that she should have it fetched from the officers' mess of the crack cavalry regiment, whose barracks were near by. She said this was a usual arrangement. We bought a sort of tier of enamelled dishes, fitting into each other and carried in a kind of

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wickerwork handle. One contained soup, the next meat, the third vegetable, while bread or dessert reposed in the top. We can testify that even crack regiments are not unduly pampered in the Fatherland, for anything plainer, or more unappetizing than these dinners, I have never tried to eat. Perhaps they gained something when served hot in the officers' *Casino*, but we found it almost impossible to down them, eaten out of our enamel-ware dishes. After a time, when the newness of everything in the theatre had worn off a little, and I began "to feel my feet," we arranged to dine at the hotel where many of the colleagues met daily. This was a far better plan, as, in addition to a really hot meal, we had a splendid opportunity to improve our German. I was naturally making rapid progress in it, but my sister still had to confine herself to the shops where they understood French. One day when I came home from rehearsal, she told me that our *Hausfrau* had repeated to her a long piece of gossip in German. Seeing by my sister's face that she had not understood, the woman said, "Oh, you don't understand, *Fräulein*. Well, I'll say it all over again in French." Then she proceeded to repeat it again, very loudly and slowly—in German!

Of course it is rather dreadful to be called just "Fräulein" by your landlady in Germany, but the

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social standing of the singers and players in a provincial theatre is usually not high enough to warrant anything else. A position in an opera house in a capital city, or in a Hoftheater, confers social importance enough upon its holder to entitle her to the prefix *gnädiges* (gracious) before the ignominious *Fräulein*, which in society is properly used to designate only a governess, a companion, or a saleswoman in a shop.

Titles and forms of address are a ticklish subject in the Fatherland, at any time. It is hard to comprehend the mazes of male progression from the simple "Rat," through the subsequent variations of Hofrat (court councillor), Geheimer Hofrat (privy court councillor), Geheimrat (privy councillor), Wirklicher Geheimrat (really truly privy councillor), to the lofty dignity of Excellenz.

Old-fashioned ladies used to employ the feminized version of their husband's titles, and I once knew an old dame who insisted upon being addressed as "*Frau Oberlandgerichtsräthin*." The bourgeoisie used to copy the aristocracy in this respect, and at the afternoon Kaffeeeklatsch, Frau Hofcondittor Meyer would inquire about the health of Herr Strassenbahnsinspektor Braun, from his wife the Frau Strassenbahnsinspektorin (street car inspectoress). Modern life is too crowded perhaps for such lengthy addresses,

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but Frau Meyer and Herr Braun are certainly less picturesque cognomens. Among the artistocracy the proper titles and forms of address have many pitfalls for the foreigner, though I used to dodge them fairly successfully by addressing every woman older than myself as "*Gnädige Frau*" irrespective of her "handle," and the men by no title at all, except in the case of a prince not of royal blood, who has to be called by the mouth-filling courtesy title of *Durchlaucht*.

Of course in letter-writing this way round is not always possible, and here the complications are simply terrifying. The salutation of a lady without any title at all ranges all the way from "*Wertes Fräulein*" (Worthy Miss), almost an insult to a person of any gentility, to the punctilious "*Hochverehrte und gnädige Frau*" (Highly honoured and gracious lady) of high society. Even the envelope provides a subtle form of insult or of flattery. In Germany one is simply born, well-born, highly well-born, or high born as the case may be. If you are rightly entitled to the third, how irritating to be publicly branded on the outside of a letter as only well-born. On the other hand, if you really belong among the merely born, what a delicate attention to be acknowledged "*Hochwohlgeborene*" for all the world, including the *Portier's Frau* to see! Shops in writing to you (as long as your credit is good) love to employ the latter

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on the envelope, repeat it in the body of the letter which always begins "Highly honoured and gracious Miss" and sign themselves "Mit Vorzüglicher Hochachtung"—"with magnificent respect." Friends, of course, call you just Fräulein So-and-so, as we should say "Miss Brown," except if they are young men, when they usually stick to the "gracious Miss." You must never inquire for the members of a person's family without the Mr., Mrs., or Miss being added: "How is your Frau Mother, Herr Father, or Fräulein Sister?" There is a curious phrase for parents—"How are your *Herren* Parents?" being the strictly correct form of question.

Yes! Etiquette is very complicated in Germany and requires a great deal of study from the "Outlander."

To return to the theatre—we expected that my sister would have the run of my dressing-room, and that she might be present at the rehearsals. We found on the contrary that the most rigorous rules were enforced to forbid entrance to the theatre to any one not a regular member of the staff. No one else was allowed to pass the porter's lodge. There were regular dressers provided by the theatre, and my sister was present only once or twice at rehearsals during my two seasons in Metz and then only by special request.

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The rehearsals for the next day were posted at the stage door. They were not printed or typed, but written in German script, with chalk on the blackboard. They would be placed there at six o'clock every evening, and my sister used to go over to find out for me what they were. She could not read German script at all, neither could I, very well; so she used to take paper and pencil and laboriously draw everything on the board, chorus calls and all, for fear of missing something. Then, letter by letter, we would puzzle it out, and find out the hours of my rehearsals, as if they had been written in cipher. She was always present at my performances.

I had to write, "I beg in the most polite manner for a seat for my sister for this evening's performance," and drop it into a special box before half past eleven in the morning. Then in the evening, if there were a vacant place in the orchestra chairs, she would have it. On Sundays the house was often *ausverkauft*, sold out, so we generally bought a seat if I were singing on that night, so as to be on the safe side. The prices ranged from four marks for box seats, to five cents in the gallery. The orchestra chairs cost three marks (75 cents), but nearly every one had an *Abonnement*, or sort of season ticket, which made them much cheaper. The rates for officers were very low indeed. The chief cavalry regiments had the

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boxes between them, and the less important lieutenants of the infantry or the despised engineers had seats in the first balcony. Years ago, in the old unregenerate days, these boxes full of young cavalymen furnished almost more entertainment than the stage. The boxes had curtains to be drawn at will, and the young rascals would order champagne served to them there, and drink toasts loudly to their favourite singers in the midst of their performances. Some of the frail fair ones of the town would visit them behind the drawn curtains, and there were high times generally. This has all come to an end, gone the road of other equally charming old customs, and I saw very little misbehaviour among the lieutenants, except sometimes when the provocation was really too strong for them. One evening a very solemn young White Dragoon, over six feet tall, coming in in the half darkness after the curtain was up, missed his chair and plumped down, sabre and all, on the floor of the box instead, to the joy of his comrades; and once in a Christmas pantomime, they all forgot their military dignity at the spectacle of a very fat young chorus girl, whom bad judgment on the part of the ballet mistress had costumed most realistically for the part of a white rabbit.

Sunday is usually chosen for the first night, as a larger proportion of the inhabitants is at liberty on

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that day. At our theatre, performances of opera were given on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday nights, with plays or *Possen mit Gesang* (farces with singing) on alternate nights. The bill changed every night, but each standard opera was repeated three or four times in the season. New operettas like the "Merry Widow" were also produced, and, if successful, ran eight or ten times during the seven months of the season. There was a company of singers consisting of a "high dramatic" soprano, a "young dramatic," a coloratura, and an "opera soubrette," all sopranos. There was a leading contralto, a second contralto to do the very small parts, who was usually a volunteer without pay, and a "comic old woman," who also took part in the plays. There was sometimes another volunteer soprano to do pages and the like. Then there was the "heroic tenor," who is a sort of King and is treated by the management with some of the ceremony used toward royalty, and the lyric tenor, quite humble in comparison, and a tenor-buffo for "funny parts," with sometimes a special operetta tenor when the theatre was prospering. There were two baritones, "heroic" and lyric, a "serious" and a "comic" bass, and one or two other men of more or less 'anomalous position who "fill in" and act in the plays. The only singers who never did anything but sing, were the two "dramatic" sopranos, the

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first contralto, and the heroic tenor and baritone. There was a company of actors besides and all of these, no matter what their standing, were expected to appear in such operas as "Tannhäuser" in the singing contest, in the church scene of "Lohengrin," and as *Flora's* guests in "Traviata," to help "dress the stage."

It is not the least of one's troubles as a beginner to stand on the stage as *Ortrud*, perhaps, and see these supercilious real actresses come filing out dressed as court beauties, cynically watching your attempt at acting.

Actors have their proper range of parts, called *Fach* in Germany, and special designations like the singers. The chief of them are the *Jugendlicher Held* or Young Hero, corresponding to the Heroic Tenor, and his partner the *Erste Heldin*. Nearly as important, however, are the *Erster Liebhaber*, or Young Lover, and the *Jugendliche Liebhaberin und Erste Salondame*—Young Lovehaveress and First Drawingroom Lady. There are the *Helden Vater* and *Heldin Mutter*, the *Intrigant* or Villain, and the *Bon Vivant* (pronounced Bong Vivong) who is a sort of general good fellow and occasional hero. The *Erster Komiker* is always a popular figure with the public and has his subordinate funnyman, usually much younger. There is a soubrette to do the saucy maid

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parts, a *Naive*, what we should call Ingenue, and a *Komische Alte*, or funny old woman; several "drawingroom ladies" and "gentlemen" and minor "*Char-gen Spieler*" or character actors. The small parts are usually filled by chorus men and women, and the opera soubrette or the operetta tenor, have to double and do the cheeky maids or giggly school girls and giddy young officers in the plays. Many of the minor actors were, or were assumed to be, sufficiently musical to take small parts in operas requiring a large cast, appearing as *Telramund's* four nobles, and as *Meister* in the first act of "*Meistersingers*" or as competitors in the *Preissingen* in "*Tannhäuser*." The opera gains very much by having these experienced actors in the small rôles.

Our chorus was composed of about thirty members, and the orchestra of from forty to fifty, reinforced in the brass and wind instruments from the local military bands. Three Kapellmeisters held sway over them: the First Kapellmeister an autocrat with arbitrary power who directed the important operas, the second who lead the old staggers like "*Martha*" and "*Trovatore*" and the operettas, and the third who was usually a volunteer learning his profession, and who acted as répétiteur for the soloists and directed pantomimes, the songs in the farces, and "*Haensel und Gretel*" once a year if he was good.

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He was always on duty during performances to direct any music behind the scenes. In good theatres there are several of these young men, as in "Rheingold" for example each Rhine daughter ought to have one to herself, and there is a special répétiteur for the chorus or chorus master besides.

Our ballet was composed of a solo dancer and about sixteen coryphées, directed by a *Balletmeisterin* who also shared the leading parts with the solo dancer. One of the girls,—Irene, was a big handsome creature who usually danced the boy's parts. She had a little girl of about six, who had apparently no father. During the second year I was told one day: "This is Irene's wedding day; will you say something to her?" It appeared she and her clown husband had been devoted to each other for years, but had neglected the ceremony as they neither of them could earn enough alone to support the two. The clown ("August," of course) could not find an engagement in the theatre and so they had just waited. He had just returned from a long world tour and now they were to be married. Every one was delighted.

Last but not least, came the supers, called in Germany *Statisten*, who held spears in "Aida" and returned victorious in "Faust." They were drawn from the infantry regiments and received thirty

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pfennigs (7½c) a night. They arrived with their *Unteroffizier* an hour before they were wanted and were turned into a big room to be made into warriors, captives, or happy peasantry. The result was sometimes amusing. In "Aida" they used to put on their pink cotton tights over their underwear, so that one saw the dark outline of socks and the garters gleaming through, and they all kept on their elastic-sided military boots, with the tabs to pull them on by, sticking out before and behind. Fortunately the audience had but a brief glimpse of them before they were ranked in a conglomerate mass at the back of the stage. Sometimes on our walks we would meet these men on sentry duty, or in batches with their *Unteroffizier*, who would call out, "*Au-gen rechts!*" (Eyes right!) and give us the officers' salute with mighty grins of recognition.

The principals of the opera are usually talented young singers on the way up, or older singers of some reputation on the way down, with perhaps a sprinkling of those who have obtained their engagements by influence. The contracts are usually for from two to three years, and are not very often renewed. The talented ones go on to better engagements, and it is "better business" for the theatre to have a change of principals. Great favourites remain longer unless they get something better. Many

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of those who were engaged with me in Metz have made careers. Two were at the Charlottenburg Opera House in Berlin at the outbreak of the war, and one in Hamburg, both in leading positions. One was a stage-manager at the Volksoper in Vienna, and one teacher in a conservatory.

## CHAPTER X

### MY DÉBUT AND BREAKING INTO HARNESS

I HAD to sing *Azucena*, my first part on any stage, without rehearsal. The reason for this dawned upon me afterwards. Though I sang German well by this time, my conversational powers still left something to be desired. I have explained that the present director had never heard my voice; no one knew of what I was capable, and they quite expected that I would prove incompetent, and had engaged a native born contralto to provide for this contingency.

When I heard one evening, that I should have to sing *Azucena* on the next, I confess that something rather like panic assailed me for a few minutes. The stage manager called me onto the stage, and spent half an hour in showing me the entrances and exits, and giving me the merest outline of the positions. That is all the preparation I had for my so-called début. The other members of the cast had sung the opera together many times the year before, which made the performance possible. The lyric tenor was a decent enough colleague, though an ab-

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solute peasant in behaviour, with an extraordinary high voice which was rapidly degenerating from misuse. The baritone was of the tried and true type, and a great favourite, and the soprano was easy to get on with. They were all nice enough to me, if somewhat uninterested and indifferent, for I had had as yet so little to do with them that we hardly knew each other. They thought me a rich dilettante at that time I fancy. I was so horribly nervous all that day that I fainted whenever I tried to stand up, and when I began to sing my sister did not recognize my voice. However, I was very well received indeed, all the criticisms the next day were favourable, and there was no question after that as to who should sing the leading rôles.

It was fortunate for me that I succeeded in pulling myself together sufficiently to make a success, as at that time the old system of *Kündigung* was still in force. I have said that a contract was not valid until the singer had successfully completed the number of guest performances stated therein. I had not been called upon for these *Gastspiele* because I was a beginner, but they are almost invariably included in the contract. Now-a-days your engagement is settled after you have successfully made these trial appearances, and you then remain in that engagement for a full season; and the management must let you

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know before February first (sometimes January first) whether you are to be re-engaged or not. This is in order to give the singer time to make arrangements for the coming season. When I was engaged in Metz the management of a theatre had the right to dismiss any singer after three weeks, whether he had made his guest appearances beforehand or not, if he had failed in that time to make good with the public. He was also liable to dismissal after his first appearance, if he proved quite impossible. This was what they were expecting in my case. The arrangement was most unfair to the poor singer, leaving him stranded (with practically no chance of work that year) after he had moved all his possessions and thought himself established for the season. The big artists' society, the *Genossenschaft*, which is the only protective institution for singers in Germany, has at last succeeded in abolishing this unjust condition of affairs. There was a flagrant case of this kind in the theatre during the first three weeks of my engagement. The "high dramatic" soprano had finished the first three weeks of her engagement, during which she had had to learn two new parts, providing costumes, at her own expense, for a rôle which she had not expected to have to sing. She had had a fair success and thought herself secure. In the meantime, the management had had no idea of keep-

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ing her on permanently, but had merely engaged her to fill in the time, while they were waiting for another singer, who was filling an out-of-season engagement elsewhere, and could not report for three weeks. When she was free, they told the first one that she had not pleased sufficiently and dismissed her. The good theatres did not take advantage of this privilege of course, even while it still existed.

My second rôle was a very small one, one of the court ladies of "Les Huguenots." A native first contralto would probably not have been asked to do such a small part, but there being no regular part for my voice in the opera, I think they were glad to use my good stage appearance, and of course, as a beginner I made no protest, being glad of every chance to become more used to the stage. The part was sprung upon me suddenly, and I had no dress for it. The second contralto also had a court lady to do, and the good creature offered to lend me a gorgeous Elizabethan dress of white satin and silver (which, she told me, she also intended to wear as *Amneris*!) and she would "go in black." I was touched, but I could not deprive her of her splendour, so we arranged something out of the pointed pink bodice of one of my other gowns, and the long white skirt of a summer dress, with a ladder arrangement of pink velvet bands sewn on up the front.

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I remember as I made my entrance, looking up suddenly and seeing the sinister eyes of Carlhof the stage manager, fixed on me from the wings. He proceeded to mock my walk, which was no doubt very American, and not that of a court lady at all. I never forgot the mental jolt it gave me and the sudden realization that every rôle should have a different walk.

The range of parts that one is called upon to perform is astonishing. Formerly the limits of a *Fach* (line of parts) were more rigidly observed than at present, when the personality of a singer in relation to a rôle is more often taken into consideration. Still, if a rôle definitely belongs to the *Fach* of a certain singer, he is supposed to have first right to it. Difficulties arise in apportioning the parts in very modern operas, whose composers seem no longer disposed to write definitely for a coloratura soprano or a serious bass, but mix up the voice range and styles of singing indiscriminately in one part. My second real part was *Fricka* in "Walkeure," in which I had a great success vocally, but unfortunately looked a great deal younger than the portly *Brünnhilde* and far more like her daughter than her stepmother. Then came the *Third Lady* in "Magic Flute," the *Third Grace* in "Tannhäuser," *Martha* in "Faust," *Orlofsky* in "Fledermaus," *Frau Reich* in

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the "Merry Wives of Windsor," the *Gräfin* in "Trompeter von Säkkingen," *Pamela* in "Fra Diavolo," *Wüch* in "Haensel und Gretel"; and finally "Carmen." All these before Christmas of my first year. I did not have one of them on my repertoire when I arrived in Metz, except *Fricka* and *Carmen*, and the latter in French.

The three graces in "Tannhäuser" were done by the beauties of the theatre, two premières danseuses and myself! We were to dress in white Greek draperies with jewels, and of course, as we were to be seductive, pink roses. I wore my beautiful *Bergcrystal* necklace, made for me in Paris. The ladies could not contain their jealousy and said of course, "aufgedonnert" (thundered out) like that I naturally would stand out from them. Annoyed at their pettiness I removed the diamonds and flowers and all ornaments. They then said of course to go without any ornaments was palpably the best way of all to make myself conspicuous. So I let it go at that.

I well remember the *Third Lady*, for there are spoken passages in this opera, and I had to speak German for the first time before an audience of critically listening natives, and Mozartian German at that! *Pamela* nearly gave me nervous prostration. They were determined that I should do it because she had to speak German with an English

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accent, so they said it was made for me. As a matter of fact, after the months I had spent in carefully eradicating my English accent it was difficult suddenly to exaggerate it to order. I had to learn, rehearse and play the entire part in five days, and I thought I should go mad. I had never seen the wretched thing, so the baritone who played my husband kindly came over to help me with the business. Otherwise my sister and I hardly left the piano to eat and sleep. The dialect part of the libretto was in an ancient manuscript copy, torn, marked and dog's-eared, and written in an almost illegible German script. I could not take time enough to puzzle it out, so my sister spent hours poring over it, deciphering the German letters literally one by one by aid of a key, and writing it again in Latin script. I had no clothes for it, as it was not on my repertoire and it plays in 1820, but they costumed it for me in modern dress, so again my summer wardrobe was called into service.

I learned it so quickly that the colleagues called me "Die Notenfresserin" or note-eater, but the strain was awful. I remember when I was studying *Pamela* the Kapellmeister told me at least ten times, how the contralto who played the *Pamela* in his father's theatre and who was also an English-speaking woman, had so caught his father's fancy in that rôle, that from

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then on he had a tremendous affair with her. This he repeated to me again and again, but I never seemed to take the hint.

As *Erda* in "Siegfried" I had a most trying experience. The director had been, as I have said, a well-known Bayreuth singer, and he thought no one could sing Wagner but himself. Unfortunately he had a strong tendency to "look upon the wine," and when he had a part to sing nervousness attacked him to such an extent that he began drinking in self-defence to enable him to stand the strain. Perhaps his beverages were more potent than usual, but that night he was decidedly irresponsible. He struggled through the *Wanderer's* first scene, and conscious that he was doing it badly, he sent out for a bottle of champagne as a bracer. The consequence was that in our scene in the third act, he was utterly incapacitated. He sang all kinds of things not in the text, bits from *Hunding* in "Walkeure," from *Daland* in "Hollaender," from "Fidelio." He rolled about the stage and lurched in my direction with his spear pointed at me, shouting *Pogner's* advice to *Eva* while I was singing *Erda's* responses. It seemed to go on for ages, but at last *Siegfried*, waiting for his cue in the wings, realized that he must save the scene, entered and escorted his befuddled relation from the stage. I had made up with a creamy white grease paint and

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no red. My sister said, "Why did you make up with rouge and not have the pallor we agreed upon?" My cheeks were so scarlet from mortification that no grease paint would have paled them.

The audience took it splendidly, I must confess, and refrained from any expression of disapproval or joy—thought it *must* have been funny! The next day there were announcements in all the papers that he had had a temporary lapse of memory owing to grief over the sudden death of his mother, who, as the stage manager cynically informed us, had reached out a hand from the grave to save her son, she having been dead for ten years! The director went to Berlin and stayed there for weeks. We afterwards learned that it was a plot, deliberately planned and put through by Carlhof to gain the direction of the theatre. I can see him now stalking around, six foot four, chewing his rag of a dyed moustache, his face pale and his eyes glittering with anxiety as to the success of his plan to encourage the director to drink. The director once told me the hours between the last meal and the time to go to one's dressing room to begin making up are the dangerous ones. He said, "First one takes a glass of wine to steady one's shaking nerves; later a glass is not enough so it becomes a bottle, then two bottles and so on till control is lost." It is easy for any singer to understand,

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and the best remedy is to omit that first glass.

"Carmen" was the second opera which I had to do without rehearsal. The soprano had failed in it and it was promised to me to keep if I could do it *ohne probe* (without rehearsal). I sang it for the first time, quaking with nerves, on Christmas Day, and my nickname after that was "Die schoene Carmen." After Christmas we produced the "Merry Widow" which was new then, and I was cast for the *Dutiful Wife*. There was plenty of variety in my work. I would sing *Carmen* on Sunday, *Orlofsky* in "Fledermaus" on Tuesday, speaking German with a Russian accent, *Pamela* on Thursday night with an English accent, and *Frau Reich* on Friday night with no accent at all! I dressed *Frau Reich* in a gown of the time of Henry V while the rest of the cast "went Shakespearean." We were far too busy for dress rehearsals of an old opera, and I supposed of course that it would be costumed in the real period of the play. When I appeared on the stage, they all demanded "And what, pray, are *you* supposed to represent?" "I am playing Shakespeare's *Frau Reich*," I answered with dignity—"and I am the only person on the stage who is properly dressed." But you have to know your colleagues well before you can make an answer like that successfully, without their hating you for it.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME STAGE DELIGHTS

WE had also what is known as *Abstecher*, on off nights. That is, performances in a neighbouring and still smaller town about once a month. We would travel altogether, taking our costumes and make-up with us, principals second class and chorus third. Our fare was paid, and the generous management allowed us two marks apiece (50c) extra for expenses! As we left at five P. M. returning at one or two in the morning, this allowance was not excessive for food alone, but the thrifty took black bread and sausage with them, and expended only fifteen pfennigs ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ c) for beer. Our *Abstecher* was a village with a cavalry barracks, a railroad station, and not much else. The theatre was built over a sort of ware-house and stable combined, and we fell over bales and packing cases at the entrance. The dressing rooms were tiny boxes, with a shelf, one gas light in a wire globe, and a red-hot stove in each room, and no window. We dressed three in a room. The stage was so small that once, as

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*Nancy*, I played a whole scene with the tail of my train caught in the door by which I had entered, and never knew it! We were always given a rapturous welcome. Sometimes one of the principals would miss the train and be forced to come on by a later one, and then the sequence of scenes in the opera would be changed quite regardless of the plot, for we would play all the scenes, in which he did not appear, first, and do his afterwards. After the opening chorus, the soprano would go on for her aria, and while she was singing it, we would decide what to give next. "I'll do my aria!" "Oh no! Not the two arias together!" "Let's have the duet from the third act, and then the soprano and tenor can just come in casually and we'll do the big quartet, and then you can do your aria!" We would see the audience hunting in a confused sort of way through their libretto, with expressions rather like Bill the Lizard. This happened once in the "Merry Wives," which is confusing at best.

After the performance there was no place in which to wait but the café of the station. I was looked upon as recklessly extravagant because I would order a *Wiener Schnitzel mit Salat* for sixty pfennigs (15c) and when I took two cents' worth of butter too, they would raise their eyebrows and murmur, "*Diese Amerikaner!*" Sometimes the Director came with

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us, and then the principals would be invited to his table and treated to (German) champagne. But we were always glad when he stayed at home, because we were much freer over our beer. There are always one or two members of the company who are extremely amusing, and their antics, imitations and reminiscences make the time fly. There was one little chap, the son of a Rabbi, who lived on nothing a day and found himself, and was an extraordinary mimic. His imitations of a director engaging singers, the shy one, the bold one, the beginner; and his marvellous take-off of the members of the company kept us in roars of laughter. He could imitate anything—a horse, a worn-out piano—and is now one of the most successful “entertainers” in Berlin. The ones in whose compartment he travelled on the train thought themselves lucky and often arrived so hoarse from laughing that they could hardly sing.

All this experience is invaluable for the beginner, his self-consciousness melts like snow in July, and it gives him, as nothing else can, that poise and authority on the stage which are almost as important as the voice itself. But the work, especially for a foreigner, is killing. It is not so much the performances themselves, great as the strain of these actually is, but the constant, never-ceasing learning by heart, and the drag of continuous rehearsing. The “room rehears-

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als" of the music alone, take place, in a theatre of this kind, in one of the dressing rooms where there is a piano. The room is almost always small and very close, and there are eight or ten people packed into it, all singing hard and exhausting the little air there is. The stage rehearsals with the almost invariable and inevitable shouting and excitement are very trying to the nerves, especially when one is making two or three débuts a week, that is, singing a new part for the first time almost every other night as I did, at the beginning of my career. The better the theatre, of course, the greater the smoothness and lack of confusion at stage rehearsals. The singers and orchestra men are more experienced, and more competent, and the manners of the Kapellmeister improve in ratio to the importance of the opera house. A little extra excitement is permissible when a new production is being put on, but at the rehearsals of repetitions undue exhibitions of "temperament" on either side are discouraged, and the powers that be have to mind their manners and stick to the conventional forms of address. The *Heldentenor* may sometimes have to allow his artistic nature to get the better of him for a moment, but no one else may claim such license.

The stage during rehearsals is like a workshop—a certain amount of noise and confusion is neces-

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sitated by the labour going on in it, but no one has time to spare from his share of the job in hand, and the discipline in a good theatre is remarkable. The native German is trained, of course, both to give and take orders well, the result of the whole system of government, both of the family and of the nation. Stage etiquette and the relationship between principals and chorus, *erste und zweite Kräfte* (principals of first and second rank) singers and the management, grows more conventional and regulated according to the class of the theatre. Those in authority may exact perfect obedience, but they must ask for it properly; and while an individual is entitled to proper consideration, he must never forget that he is but a unit of the whole.

The dressing-room arrangements in Metz were rather primitive. The theatre was 100 years old, for one thing, and no one had ever had the money to install new conveniences. In a good German theatre, the dressing rooms are rarely used for rehearsing, and the principals dress alone, at least when they have a big rôle to sing. In Metz I shared my room with several other women and had only a corner of it which I could call my own. Long shelves with lockers under them ran down two sides of the room, with lights over them at intervals, and under every light a singer "made up." There was a long glass

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at one end of the room, but we had to provide individual mirrors for ourselves. There was no running water, only a couple of jugs and basins stood in one corner of the shelf. Good routined dressers were provided by the theatre. Mine was an Alsatian who loved to speak French with me, but whom I discouraged as I wanted all the practise I could get in German. She used to call me "Fräulein Miss"—pronouncing the latter like the German word *miess* which means mediocre, but she meant to be particularly respectful. I have always found that it pays a hundred fold to make friends of the dressers, stage-doorkeeper, property-man, carpenter, head scene-shifter, fireman and all the other workers whose co-operation is necessary for a good *ensemble*. It is usually quite easy to be on good terms with them, and they have unlimited opportunities for making things go smoothly for you, or the reverse.

Women's costumes are not kept in the theatre; as they are the personal property of the singer they must be kept at home, and be sent over to the theatre on the morning of a performance. A *Korbträger* (basket carrier) is usually provided to whom you give from 75 cents to \$1.00 a month, and who performs this service for you—but many singers send their maids. With the usual discrimination against our sex, men's costumes are provided in opera houses

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of all grades. In the largest theatres the women's are furnished also, and you even have to have special permission to wear your own.

The scenery and costumes in Metz were often surprisingly good when one considered that so few "sets" must do such varied things. Our property man was an inventive genius at making something out of nothing. He prided himself upon certain realistic details. If the piece called for coffee, the real article, though of some dreadful variety unknown to contemporary culinary science, was provided, and really poured into the cups. If a meal were to be served on the stage, some sort of real food was there for the actors to eat, even if it were only slices of bread served elaborately as the most *recherché* French supper, though usually it was ladyfingers. Eating scenes are usually confined to the drama, though there are some operas in which a meal "comes before" as the Germans say. In the "Merry Wives of Windsor" for example, the scene containing *Anna's* letter aria opens with the company at supper in *Frau Reich's* home. The wives are explaining their tricks and plotting *Falstaff's* final discomfiture in spoken dialogue. One night when I was singing *Frau Reich* in Metz there was a particularly attractive dish of real apples on the stage supper table. The *Herr Reich* was the serious bass, a thrifty individual who couldn't bear

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to let a penny's worth of anything escape him. As his guests rose to go he picked up the dish of apples and pressed it upon them.

"Here," he improvised, "take these home to the children. Oh! You have no children—well, take them anyway—the children will come later."

His hospitable wishes were received with bewilderment by the audience, but as he made his exit with his guests and immediately began to eat the apples, he bore his scolding from the *régisseur* very philosophically. On some stages where the provisions are more elaborate, the actors in certain plays make a regular practise of eating their suppers on the stage. In "Divorçons" for example or in the "Anatol Cyclus" of Schnitzler.

Our property man in Metz, with the historic Shakespearean name of Mondenschein, (Moonshine) was an ardent lover of drapery. An artistocratic interior, to his mind, must be entirely filled with as many different materials as possible, all hanging in folds. He had three pairs of near-silk portières, bright pink, dull green, and pale yellow, and the combinations that he made with those six curtains were endless. Garlands of roses, too, were a great resource of his—draped round a couch with a fur rug upon it, and a red light over all, they transformed the scene into the bower of a Messalina. In a white

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light festooned upon a mantel-piece, or above a doorway, they could be depended upon to supply the appropriate setting of the *Erste Naive's* most appealing scene. The young lovehaveress and first salon lady, had to receive them, wired together into a bunch, with the same delightful surprise, and put them into the same Japanese jar without any water in it, in play after play. But the property man always squandered a perfectly new, uncreased piece of paper for every performance with which to make a cornucopia for them, in the approved German style. He was quite a specialist in such matters as the colour of telegrams in different countries, and in the manner of folding newspapers, points which are sometimes neglected in many better theatres. Of course his talents in this direction had a better chance in the dramatic than in the operatic productions.

It is a curious thing to note in this connection, how archaic the arrangement of such details remains in operatic performances even on the best stages. How in "Carmen" for example, the singers must pretend to drink to *Escamillo* out of perfectly dry tin cups, instead of using real wine and glasses, as a quite second-rate dramatic company would do. How *Butterfly* and *Suzuki* are never given real tea to serve to the *Consul* or *Yamadori*. Or how the girls in "Thais"

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bring up their water-jars out of the well with the outsides quite dry.

Of course in theatres of the Metz class matters of costuming are simplified, and historical accuracy is not one of the aims. For example, everything before Christ is done in fur rugs and winged helmets for the men, and flannel nightgowns and long hair for the women. Any period up to the thirteenth century is costumed in mantles and gowns of furniture brocade, after that it is *Alt-deutsch* (old German), or *Spanisch* (Shakespearean—mostly black velvet and jet or white satin and silver), until it turns safely into *Rococo*, which means white wigs. After that it is all *Modern*, and even the chorus has to supply its own modern clothes. The men principals have their historical costumes, with the exception of wigs, tights, and shoes, supplied to them, but the women must have their own. The collection of men's clothes in an old theatre is sometimes quite remarkable, some of the suits of a hundred years ago being actually of the period.

They retain the smells of the period also, many of them; for in a theatre like that of Metz I don't believe the men's clothes were ever cleaned. Things which have been worn several times a week for seven months a year during the past hundred years, ac-

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cumulate a richness and variety of odours which must be sniffed to be appreciated—a very ancient and fish-like smell indeed. I often wished at Metz that I had no use of my nose, and I have wished it many times since. As *Amneris*, to force your way for the entrance in the triumph scene, through an Egyptian populace composed of German Infantrymen, is a squeamish business at best; but when they are attired in clothes that haven't been washed for years, it is a feat before which any one may quail, especially if he belongs to the number of unfortunates, unluckily far from rare among singers, whose stomach nerves are affected in any case when they have a big part before them.

Washing was not any too popular in Metz even among the principals. I have dressed with leading women whose arms showed streaks of white where the water had run down as they washed their hands, stopping conscientiously at the wrists. Their make-up would be removed with the same dirty rag night after night during the whole season; and their personal garments under more or less smart outer raiment, had often done overlong service. I must hasten to say, however, that this state of affairs was the exception rather than the rule, and that in better theatres, the women principals were always scrupulously cleanly.

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Over ornamentation or fineness in undergarments is usually looked upon as rather questionable, among the solid middle classes in Germany. My mother had made me a dainty supply of be-ribboned linen, and I was told after I had been in Metz for some time, that at first, the Alsatian woman who dressed me reported me to be "*beaucoup trop soignée de ne pas avoir un amant.*" However, she changed her mind later on, and put it down to American extravagance—always a safe play. Some of the men were much more careless than the women. Our operetta tenor played the whole season in the same shirt, powdering the bosom freshly each evening with a yellowish powder which he used for his face.

At Carnival time, some of the Schauspieler remained for three days in the clothes in which they had played on Saturday night, never going to bed, or even removing their make-up till the fun came to an end early Wednesday morning.

Many of the older members dyed their hair, as it had begun to turn grey. Of course they did not have it done by competent people, or nearly often enough, and the shades of rusty brown, green, or purple it assumed were quite startling. Our first Kapellmeister used to dye his hair a rich black. He was a good-looking man and very vain. He was also portly and easily became over-heated. Of course

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when this happened, the perspiration running down his neck was dyed black too, and he would be intensely worried for fear we should see it. We knew his sensitiveness, and took delight in sitting directly behind him at the piano, though he would urge, beg, and finally command us to sit beside him. He was kindhearted in his way, and I remember one instance of this. The stage manager, in a vile humour, had come storming into the midst of a room rehearsal one day, with some trivial complaint against me, and had succeeded in making me cry, not a difficult matter at that time as I was always in a state of nerve strain owing to continuous over-fatigue. The Kapellmeister did his best to comfort me, telling me not to mind, praising my work, and finally pressing upon me his huge, brand new silk handkerchief—a real sacrifice, as he had probably intended to use it for days! His fingertips used to split in the cold weather from much piano pounding and I won his heart by prescribing collodion for them. He continually praised my sight reading and quickness in learning and it was he who gave me the nick-name of “Notenfresserin.”

## CHAPTER XII

### MISPLACED MOISTURE AND THE STORY OF A COURT-LADY

THE Bohemian, Hungarian and Croatian singers nearly always add to one's joy in work by eating garlic. The "high dramatic" soprano in my next engagement was from Croatia. The first time I went to Prague to sing, on alighting from the train I sniffed a strangely familiar odour. The impression of familiarity grew stronger and stronger as I drove to the hotel—but I couldn't place it. At last it came to me—the whole town smelled like our soprano! I have often wished, while on the stage, for temporary atrophy of the senses. In addition to the fustiness of much worn clothes and infrequent bathing, you really have all kinds of horrors to endure.

Some terrible creatures with a passion for distinct enunciation and with unfortunate dental formation, spray you copiously when uttering words like *Mutter* or *Freude*. This always seems to happen in

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some impassioned scene when you simply can't get away from them, and have absolutely no defence. Others have painfully hot and wet, or painfully cold and wet hands with which they persistently paw you. I remember one lyric tenor who was my bugbear because he had hands like a fresh, cold fish. The soprano and I had a scene with him in one opera, in which she had to say, "*Die Hand, so weich, so warm*" (the hand, so soft, so warm), speaking of his clammy member. I dared her one night, to say instead, "*Die Hand, so feucht, so kalt*" (The hand, so moist, so cold), and when it came to the point, sure enough she did so, her voice so shaky with suppressed laughter, that it came out in a tremulous pianissimo. We both had to turn away from the front in silent convulsions, but not a soul in the house was the wiser.

This is a horrible subject and I might enlarge upon it endlessly, recalling for example, the pleasures of being folded in the embrace of a large, warm, damp tenor smelling at best of onions; or still worse the large drops which rain upon you during the most touching love scene from his manly brow, while you, though shuddering with disgust, daren't try to dodge them, or even change the wistfully adoring expression of your countenance. It may be honest sweat, but it is a demned moist unpleasant kind of honesty in my opinion. Goritz told me that he once, as Kur-

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*wenal*, in the last act of "Tristan," dripped on a prostrate *Tristan's* eye so long that the poor tenor was blind for days after. This is German efficiency!

Some of the colleagues at Metz were a great contrast to others in their scrupulous care of their personal appearance. The lyric baritone, a youngster from the Rhineland making his *début* in opera, attracted me at the very first rehearsal by his groomed look and beautifully manicured finger-nails. He came from quite ordinary people, and had been brought up to be a "Tapizierer," curtain hanger, upholsterer, etc. He had never met any Americans before and we grew to like him very much, and used to let him go for walks with us, and come to us for tea. He was always wanting to *tapizieren* for us and criticizing the hang of the curtains, etc., in our rooms. We taught him to play Canfield, more to keep him from talking than for any other reason, for my sister and I used to play patience for hours, so that we should not be tempted to talk when I was resting my voice in the brief intervals between rehearsals and performances. We used to play with pretty little German patience cards in a pocket size, and he was simply infatuated with the game. He showed all his friends how to play, and dozens of packs of these cards were imported from Frankfort where they are made.

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The craze spread rapidly; all the officers began to play in their Casinos, and the principals in the theatre were always being roared at for keeping the stage waiting during rehearsals, when they missed their cues by being absorbed in the game of Canfield. It became the great resource of those who had small parts in the first act of an opera, and then had to wait in costume and make-up until the very end like the *Meister* in "Meistersinger," or *Mary* in "Fliegender Holländer" who has a seemingly interminable wait after her one scene at the beginning of the second act, until at the very last of the third she has to rush in for the single phrase "*Senta, Senta, wass willst du tun?*"

In return for our tea, the little baritone would tell us amusing tales of his experiences in a cavalry regiment while doing his military service. His high spirits and his beautiful voice made him popular with officers and men, but he was quite unamenable to discipline, and had spent something like ninety days in prison during his first year, for such offences as refusing to stop singing on the march, or for cheeking an officer. He used to call us his goddesses, and speak to us as "Fräuleinchen." Our rooms, through him, were the starting place of new culinary ideas in Metz. We taught him to make and like such American delicacies as salted almonds, chocolate fudge, and



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hot chocolate sauce for ice cream, an unheard of combination. We tried to make him like fruit salad with mayonnaise; but the mixture of sweet with oil and vinegar was too much for his burgher palate, and he used to quote to us the Bavarian proverb, "*Was der Bauer net kennt frisst er net.*" (What the peasant doesn't know he doesn't eat.)

The country round Metz is rarely beautiful, in its half-French, half-German character. It retains its typical French poplars, planted in long lines, which turn pure gold in autumn. A placid river, the Moselle, runs between hills covered with orchards and vineyards, with picturesque villages of grey stone and red tiling, piled steeply up their sides. The meadows in the fall are filled with lavender crocuses—the kind that Meredith's Diana got up at four A. M. to gather. Every village has of course its "Gasthaus," some still absolutely French in the arrangement of their marble topped tables, mirrors, and red upholstered benches running round three sides of the room. We have drunk coffee in autumn, and *Maibowle* in spring in every one of them, I think. I dare say many of them are still using the same card board circles under their customers' beer-glasses which we marked with our initials. Can you flip them from the edge of the table into your own hand?

The town of Metz itself is interesting enough, and

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we explored it thoroughly. It is very ancient ground indeed, and there are Roman walls still to be seen, with characteristically beautiful brick-work; old chapels, a Gothic cathedral, and the remains of the mediaeval wall and moat which once surrounded the town, with great arched fortified gates at its east and west entrances.

On returning once from a long walk with the little baritone we entered by the eastern gate, and as he was doing a small part that evening, and it was getting unpleasantly near the hour of the performance, we took a short cut through an unfamiliar part of the town. We soon found ourselves in a narrow street of respectable enough looking houses, but as we passed, out of nearly every window on both sides, a female head was thrust, all in varying degrees of frowiness, and remarks and comments in half unintelligible dialect were yelled at us with shrieks of hideous laughter. Our little escort grew purple with confusion, walking faster and faster, and when we reached an open square he broke into the most fervent apologies for unwittingly leading us into such a street. It was a curious and unpleasant little experience and reminded me of certain quarters in oriental cities of which I had heard tales. We named it "the street of queer women," and avoided the eastern gateway in our walks thereafter.

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Later in the season another colleague sometimes joined our tea parties and walking expeditions. This was an immensely talented youth, attached to the theatre in an anomalous position of third Kapellmeister, in reality a volunteer without pay, hoping to pick up an occasional chance to gain experience in conducting an orchestra. He was a Frenchman of excellent family who had studied in one of the great conservatories and thought he spoke the German language. Such German I have never heard before or since. His French inability to aspirate an "h," a pronounced stutter, and the most nonchalant disregard of gender, formed a combination which was enough to upset the gravity of a German customs house official himself! It was his business among other things, to "*einstudieren*" the new members of the chorus in any opera which they did not know, but of course his version of their language rendered any authority he might have had over them quite ineffectual, and his position was anything but enviable. At the same time he was a really magnificent pianist, a composer of promise, and a thorough musician; but if ever a creature was out of his element he was that creature as Kapellmeister in Metz. And yet what is a young fellow in his position to do? The desire to conduct, the longing to interpret the great masters through the medium of an orchestra, possessed

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him to the point of obsession; but where to find an orchestra to conduct was a problem. The barrier "no experience" was erected across his path as it had been across mine, though he must serve an apprenticeship somewhere.

The musical life of Germany attracted him for the same reasons as it had attracted me, and so he endured a veritable martyrdom in the pursuance of his dream. He was a pupil of Nikisch and told us Nikisch had told him he made half his career with his cuffs. Whoever has watched him shoot them gently out as he begins to conduct will know what he meant.

Our rooms were a sort of haven for this boy, I think, where he could talk of the things that absorbed him in a language that was his servant instead of his master. In return he would play so gorgeously for us, that our little upright piano rocked under the strain. He could suggest a whole orchestra in his playing. Strauss' "Salome" was brand new then and he revelled in it, and adopted the motif of *Jochanaan* as a signal which he and the baritone would whistle under our windows. Sometimes he would get lost at the piano and play for hours, till our supper time was past, and our good friend Emma Seebold, the "*Hoch Dramatische*," would rush in and urge us to hurry and get ready for some mythical dinner to

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which we were invited. This was always successful, owing to Seebold's talent.

We grew very fond of her and often spent our evenings together. She had a lovely voice and would put her head back on her chair sometimes in the evening and sing us languorous Austrian peasant songs with her fascinating Viennese accent. Her passion was remnants, and she would send home boxes of scraps of passementerie and odds and ends of silk trimmings which she would sew all over her costumes. The richness she saw in it was pathetic. Bargain gloves were also irresistible, and she had green ones and purple ones, spotted and mildewed ones, and loved them all because they were cheap.

The pianist and the baritone often met at our rooms and got on surprisingly well considering their utter lack of points of contact and the natural contempt that they felt for each other. The Frenchman was certainly mildly crazy. He believed that his astral body, or psychic envelope, or something was visible as an aura of light around his hand, and he would hold it up and look at it and say, "*Ah, oui, elle est la—je vais bien aujourd'hui,*" or shake his head and say, "*Non, pas la aujourd'hui—je ne suis rien!*" He was good looking, bearing a strong resemblance to the portraits of Oscar Wilde. He dressed well, and his washing bills—amounting as

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we were told, with bated breath, to ten and fifteen marks a week—were the scandal of the theatre! Since those days he has gone back to his piano, though he persevered in the theatre long enough to obtain a second Kapellmeister position in a good opera house. I have met him casually all over Europe, and he is one of the very few of the old *Kollegen* from Metz whom I have ever seen again.

These three were the only ones that season whom we cared about, though we were friendly enough with all of them after Christmas, and as I have said, we dined at the hotel with a group of them every day. They were all types in their way. First the director—a survival of the old school, with rather long dyed hair and enormous dyed moustache, always in *Geh-rock* (frock coat) with a large tie in which reposed a royal monogram in pearls and diamonds presented to him by the Hereditary Grand Duke of Glumphenberg-Schlimmerheim or something, during his career as *Heldenbariton*. In the street he wore a soft black felt hat which would have done for the *Wanderer* in “Siegfried,” and of course a furlined coat whenever the weather gave the least excuse for one. Champagne was his universal panacea—his very present help in trouble. If he had a disagreement with a singer for any cause and wished to make it right again, he would always send a bottle of *Sekt*

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if it were a woman, or present the money to buy one if it were a man. He had been a famous singer in his day, and known others far more so, and his reminiscences could be interesting enough. His stories of Bayreuth under the old régime, were really interesting, with the prescribed position of every finger, every gesture studied to an inch, every tone closed, opened, coloured according to strictest rule, every syllable enunciated with minutest care, and the effect of all this schooling on the singer—the strained and broken nerves, the wrecked voices that were the result of it. Diction—*Aussprache*—was naturally enough his hobby, but his ideas were absurdly exaggerated and caused much more or less 'hidden amusement among the *Personal*. He insisted, for example, upon so much "t" in a phrase like Mignon's "*Dahin, dahin, moecht ich mit dir,*" that it sounded like "*Moecht tich mit tier.*" Anything of that sort among colleagues is looked upon as a tremendous joke, especially when it is on the director.

One result of his former glory was that famous people came to this theatre to *gastieren* and it also seemed to us as if every former singer or actor in Germany of any pretension to fame, who had a son or daughter to launch in either profession, sent them to our director for a *début*. This was looked upon by us as a bore; but the famous guests were rather

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amusing, because when they had gone, the director used to relate all kinds of derogatory stories about them. Possart — Ritter, Ernst von — was perhaps the most renowned. He came to recite Manfred at a special performance with our soloists and chorus. The director told us how, during the most impassioned speeches of Goethe or Shakespeare his eye would be on the upper gallery, counting empty places, and how after the performance when the box office sheet showed an *ausverkauftes Haus* he would demand, "What about those three empty seats in the second row of the top gallery, at the left?"

He told a similar tale of a famous Austrian guest-artist, the leading Teutonic exponent of his day of the negative side in the never-ending argument of stage technique "to feel or not to feel." He had mechanical as well as histrionic genius, and his dramatic art had become so mechanical too, towards the end of his career, that he could utilize such places in his great parts as Hamlet's soliloquy for thinking out scientific puzzles, although his power over the emotions of his audience never lost its effect.

The director's own story was a real romance. While still on the upward side of the hill of fame, he had met and loved the wife of a nobleman, the scion of an ancient house. She had been maid-of-honour at the most exclusive court in Europe, the con-



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fidante of the royal family, and was said to know the true story of many of the mysterious incidents in court history. In fact she was supposed to have been married off hurriedly to her much older husband to get her away from the royal circle of whose secrets she knew altogether too many. The infatuation of the singer for the lady was mutual, and in course of time a boy was born to them, who reached the age of six years before the noble husband consented to divorce his wife, or rather, I think, his lawyers consented for him, as by that time dissipation had quite softened whatever brain he may have had to begin with. This mental condition of his gave her the care of their children, and in Metz their youngest son, their daughter a girl of about twenty, and the director's little boy all lived together. At holiday times another of her sons, a most charming young fellow, a lieutenant in a crack cavalry regiment, used to visit them too. She invited my sister and me to meet him, and the whole family often attended the opera together. He liked me in several rôles and used to send me wonderful flowers. I still have a huge green bowl which he sent me filled with violets, in return for the photograph for which he had begged. He was an example of the most elegant type of young officer, the aristocrat of *Uradlige Familie*, fair, with delicate features; his six feet of slimness, with long slender limbs and very little body,

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clothed in his glove-fitting uniform. He had the fashionable three creases across the front of his smart Hussar jacket where his tummy should have been. His poor little story turned into tragedy. He contracted consumption and did not tell his people, but used their influence to get himself transferred to German West Africa, on the plea of wanting to see service. Arrived there, he quietly shot himself one evening as the easiest way out of a life that promised him nothing but misery. A sort of malignant fate seemed to pursue the children of that first marriage, for the charming young daughter also came to a sudden and most tragic end, as I shall tell later on.

The director's wife was very nice to us. She often invited us to visit her although we did so but seldom. Her rooms were filled with relics of her former life—portraits of herself as lady-in-waiting to the Empress of Austria, in court dress, portraits of her Empress, old photographs of groups on terraces and at castle gates, almost every person in them a "personage." She herself still wore her hair as her Empress had done, in a coronet of narrow braids set round her head. She said that they were sewn together with the same coloured silk as the hair every morning after being braided, to make them stand up. With us she always played the *grande dame*, apparently quite without effort, but there were stories about her

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which seemed to show that she could be something very different.

She certainly could talk most interestingly of her former grandeur. One of her tales was of a lady of the court who owned the smallest dog that any one had ever seen. It was so tiny that she used to carry it, when in evening dress, in the front of her décolletage. One night at dinner as she leaned forward to eat her soup, the dog fell into the plate. There was vermicelli in the soup, and before she could fish it out of this entanglement, the poor little thing was drowned! Another time the Frau Direktor showed us a photograph of a very slim and shapely young dragoon in full regalia, cloak and all, holding a letter up to hide his face. As there was evidently a story we begged her to tell it to us. She said that there had been a certain young married Countess of the court, who was known as a great prude and was always boasting of her exaggerated wifely devotion. Her airs became, said the Frau Direktor, quite insufferable, and so she herself resolved to put such armour-plate virtue to the test. At Carnival time, therefore, she dressed herself as a young officer for a ball at which the *Hofgesellschaft* was to be present, and a very dashing figure she made, according to the picture. In this disguise she then proceeded to give the Countess the rush of her life. The gallant pur-

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sued the virtuous Countess all the evening, and was rewarded by being asked to escort her ladyship to her home. In the carriage the "Lieutenant's" attentions became still more pressing, when to his secret dismay, the fair creature suddenly melted entirely, cast herself into his arms, and swore she adored him. Arrived at her house, the "Lieutenant" beat a hasty retreat vowing all sorts of things for their next meeting, which naturally never took place. But the vanished Lieutenant did not resemble the gentlemen of Virginia who kiss and never tell, for the Countess' share in the story leaked out, and her reputation for unassailable devotion was irreparably damaged, to the great satisfaction of all her acquaintance.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HUMAN PASSIONS AND SMALLPOX

**A**T the beginning of the season, the director's family was still in the country, where they remained until the opera had been running for some time. We met his wife and daughter for the first time at a luncheon given by him at the hotel where we had arranged to take our two o'clock dinner, after trying all sorts of unsuccessful ways of dining in private. The stage manager of the drama, the first and second Kapellmeister, the "Bureau Chef," the Helden tenor, Heldenbariton, High Dramatic, Coloratura, my sister and myself were all invited. Just as we were seating ourselves, the *Schauspiel Regisseur*, Herr S——, noticed that there were thirteen at table. He turned as white as a sheet, jumped up, and scarcely stopping to apologize, hurriedly left the room, nor could he be prevailed upon to return, although the director followed him into the hall to remonstrate. He protested that one of our number was certain to die within the year as it was, and he wished to insure its not being himself by refusing to sit

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down at all. Curiously enough, his prophecy came true, for the Director's young step-daughter died very suddenly soon after.

Herr S—— was a most unpleasant person, as I discovered later, and I was always thankful that my identification with the *Opern-Personal* kept me out of his way. He had a sort of spurious veneer and ingratiating manner, which was at variance with his hard, square, passion-scarred countenance. He pretended an enormous admiration for the American woman, and that very day before luncheon, he showed me with great pride a small American-made patent-leather shoe, which he took out of the tail pocket of his frock-coat, telling me with a leer that it belonged to a girl of *my* country, where the women had the most beautiful feet in the world, and that it was his talisman and never left him! He bore a bad name among the women players in the company. One of the little actresses, a girl of good family, in her first season, used to tell me unpleasant tales of him in her rapid, ungrammatical French, whenever I met her; and she always referred to him as "That beast!"

Our Heldentenor of that season was an uninteresting personage, a quite elderly man of enormous routine and mediocre equipment, who had sung in all sorts of opera houses and was on the last lap of a long career. He was said to be nearly sixty, and

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was quite bald, but he managed to make a surprisingly youthful appearance on the stage. He had been at it so long that he could make an attempt at acting almost anything—even youth. His sprightly legs in “Fra Diavolo” were quite adolescent. He kept himself discreetly to himself, and was never seen in the cafés, nor on the streets with his colleagues.

His greatest joy was a tiny dog, whose tricks he delighted to show off to every one. The little thing would whine for a soprano, growl for a bass, howl for a tenor, bark when told “The Direktor’s coming,” and sit up and beg at the word *Gage* (salary,) in a very amusing way, and his master was intensely proud of his accomplishments.

The lyric tenor of the first season was a peasant from Swabia, with a droll accent and a lovely voice which he forced in a most agonizing manner. He would shake all over when he sang a high note, and yet his natural voice ranged easily to high D sharp—I have even heard him sing an E. His dialect and his ignorance made him the butt of the company, but he was very goodnatured and took it all in good part. He used to say: “Yes, I know—my wife is a French woman and she tells me to say *Mignon*, but I’m a peasant—I say *Mischnong*.” She was years older than he and of better class. She had helped him to the little study that he had had, and out of gratitude

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he had married her, but they were said to disagree very consistently.

The Heldenbariton was quite a nice fellow, big and burly with a good voice; he was a great favourite with the public, whom he had pleased by marrying, out of the chorus, a townswoman who adored him.

The second Kapellmeister was a vague, weak creature, henpecked by his vain little wife who was never happy unless she was the centre of some one's admiration. She was inordinately proud of her small feet, and our little friend the lyric baritone used to make her furious, by insisting that mine were smaller! Her dream was to go on the stage too, if only to sing pages in "Lohengrin" and "Tannhäuser," and later her hope was realized, I heard, when several of them went off together in April to a "Monatsoper" on the *Russische Grenze* (Russian Frontier). The coloratura soprano was a Dutch woman, speaking German with more accent than I did. She was very fair, very fat, and very lazy, and she had a capacity for food that I have seen equalled but never surpassed. She dined with us daily, and woe to the person who had to serve himself from a dish that had been passed to her! Eat until you could hold no more was a part of the creed of all my colleagues. Anything short of absolute repletion, and the meal was considered a failure. "*Sind Sie satt?*" They would

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ask each other gravely—“*Ich bin nicht satt!*” Meaning literally, “Are you full?” “*I am not full.*” And this was a grave cause of resentment against the hotel management. I must say that most of them reached this desirable consummation long before the coloratura soprano, for she continued placidly as long as there was any food in sight. She would even finish anything left on another’s plate, and our table always looked as if a horde of locusts had visited it.

Those colleagues of my first engagement are stamped upon my memory—representing as they did so much that was new to me,—a new nationality, a new profession, and in many cases a new social class. Take them all together they were a pretty decent lot considering their antecedents and surroundings. As a general rule, I think the actors are apt to be of a somewhat higher social class than the singers, as a remarkable voice occurs when and where it will, while a vocation for the acting stage presupposes a certain amount of education and refinement of surroundings, although there have been, of course, some notable exceptions.

They wanted us to meet the officers of the different smart regiments. The Red Dragoons in particular were supposed to be all-powerful in deciding the success or failure of a singer, and the colleagues kindly

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thought we ought all to have the advantage of this. One or two of the women of course had affairs with them, and as Marjorie and I did not care to meet the officers in just that society, we were sometimes hard put to it to find a good excuse. Once my sister went to bed, though perfectly well, for several days, to avoid a particularly pressing invitation. Later we met these officers through letters from our relatives, and liked some of them tremendously. Even their affairs were the outcome of the system, and did no particular harm to any one.

The opera soubrette had one of years' standing with a tall ungainly White Dragoon. He was a harmless idiot, and she a smart German-Polish Jewess, a nice little thing. We each had a "Benefiz" before leaving the Metz engagement, when we were showered with flowers and gifts from our friends and admirers, also sharing in the box-office receipts. R——, the soubrette, told us the day after hers, still breathless from rage, that "*Er*"—she never called him anything but "*He*"—had sent her an umbrella, bound in the middle of a huge sheaf of roses. He had not passed it over the foot-lights, so that every one might see its splendour, but had left it at her rooms. When he called on her expecting soft thanks, she berated him soundly, and succeeded in so enraging his usually

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placid self that he threw his big sabre through the window, sending it crashing into the court below.

One handsome Red Dragoon, a notorious connoisseur of music and women, and believed absolutely irresistible, always sat in a box at our right from the stage. His one reputable passion was music. He had at that time an affair with a Dutch woman, who had been handsome and distinguée—she was pitifully his slave. Going to the theatre one evening we saw her approaching from one direction in the big court in front of the theatre, as he approached from another. She smiled infatuatedly at him but he passed her without a look—perhaps his idea of a tribute to my sister and me. I felt sorry for her as the joy left her face.

Several years after, while touring in Holland, in a charming little place where we went to pass a free afternoon, we saw this same woman. She had found the strength to shake off her German master, had married a countryman and looked prosperous and happy.

Neither Marjorie nor I ever received an offensive word or look from an officer. They used sometimes to send me postcards after a *Carmen* or *Amneris* night, closely scribbled over with signatures and greetings and phrases of admiration, all highly re-

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spectful. It always pleased me very much to receive these cards.

The *Genossenschaft* members of most theatres organize a *fête* every year for the benefit of their society, and that spring we had a fancy dress ball. A lady is chosen at these balls by popular vote to be Rose Queen. I was chosen that time and had to parade around the room on the arm of a portly Major, who often sent me flowers and books of his own poems. I wore my *Carmen* dress of black satin, with gold flowers, and my scarlet Spanish shawl. There was much cheap champagne drunk to the popular toast of "General Quenousamong." This was originally "*Que nous aimons*" (To those we love), and the "general" meant that every one was to join in. The French touch was considered elegant, just as *Couzank* was the polite word for cousin, and *Satank* for satin. Balls of this kind are highly popular and a great contrast to the usually simple lives of these small-town people.

One form of simplicity I never adopted was the quite general one of eating their evening supper, consisting usually of a bit of sausage, and black bread and butter, out of bits of paper casually put down amongst the objects on the table in their bedrooms. When you had finished, you simply rolled up and threw away the greasy papers and the thing was over.

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Sometimes a meal may be captured free. One of our "comics" in Metz had to fish at the back of the stage in an operetta. He was always furnished with a salt herring by the property man, which he would suspend solemnly out of sight of the audience for a while, then slowly draw up, and proceed to eat. A clean picked spine was all that remained by the end of the act, and he had had his supper.

Often the performances supplied me with welcome comic relief behind the scenes. I learned for instance, that the text of the Anvil chorus sung round me, as I lay on the canvas rock couch of *Azucena*, in "Trovatore," was: "*Ich habe Dir schon laengt gesagt, die Wurst sie schmeckt nach Seife*"—"I told you long ago, the sausage tastes of soap." Also the soldiers in "Faust" made their rollicking return from the wars to the words: "*He—ring und Apfel—Kartoffelsalat.*" "Herring and apple—potato salad." *Siegmund* grows woefully vulgar, and the opening bars of his love song to his sister always say now to me: "*Winter Struempfe riechen im Monat Mai.*"

Once in "Tiefland" the old man in the first act was presented with a large lump of Limburger cheese, which he had to sniff and hold gratefully for a long time, while his rejoicing colleagues slapped their knees with glee in the wings. Sometimes the humour was replaced by other less agreeable emotions. For

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my *Benefiz*, the last year of my engagement, I was to sing *Carmen*. I wanted a popular guest tenor from a neighbouring *Hoftheater* to be my *José*, and he finally agreed to come. He would not come in time for rehearsal and I did not see him until I turn my head in the first recitative and see him making his sword chain. From then on, he directed me in lordly tones throughout the first act. I had often sung *Carmen* in Metz and the audience knew most of my business and expected it; also as I had prepared the rôle in Paris and spent months of study on it I did not see why all of my business should be changed on my own festive night. Therefore in our short talk before the second act, I told him my positions as nicely as I could, he saying to everything, "*Aber warum? Warum?*" (But why, why?). I stood this as long as I could and told him all the warums, till finally I said "Because I want to!" At this he lost his temper and left the stage. I was surprised, but supposed he was nervous. From then on, things went from bad to worse. Everything *Carmen* said to *José*, he thought Howard was saying to him. I tried to whisper that I meant nothing by it—that that was the way I played it, but he grew blacker and blacker. Finally in the last act I struck him with my fan, my usual business to make *José* let *Carmen* pass. He rushed at me and caught my wrists and shouted, "*Was faellt Ihnen denn*

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*ein?*” (“What’s the matter with you?”) I was frightfully upset and nearly crying by then, but had to go on. At the last as I lay on the floor and he stood over me, he deliberately threw his heavy dagger in my face, and I, a corpse, had to move my head to avoid being hurt. He rushed to his dressing room and cried and shouted for a half hour before his wife dared to go in and calm him. I believe it was all jealousy. He had been most popular in the town, and could not bear to share a performance with any one. The next day I could hardly hobble; all my bones seemed wrenched; but every one was most sympathetic and kind.

The bells in Metz were most numerous and depressing. The cathedral near us chimed all day an out-of-tune singsong, which the natives said was, “*Ich bin todt und komm’ nicht wieder!*” (“I am dead and shall not come again!”)

The depression of the first year culminated in a smallpox epidemic, which broke out shortly before the theatre closed. Marjorie dreamed of it just before it happened, and that I died of it, which, of course, haunted her all through the outbreak. It was frightfully mismanaged by the authorities. The suspects were called for by policemen and carried from the houses to an open wagon, (this in February and March,) and driven to the hospitals. The *Kaserne*

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or barracks where cases occurred, were isolated; but in our daily walks we passed them with shudders. We were both so tired and had had so many shocks and eye-openers as to what life really is, that this last nightmare completely obsessed and unnerved us. Our policeman neighbour carried suspects, and of course his uniform was never even fumigated and we knew it.

The dear little daughter of the director's wife was taken away from home one night, in spite of her parents' remonstrances. She was ill of rheumatic fever, and the authorities heard of it, pronounced it smallpox, and took her away in the open carriage. She died in a few days, and no one ever knew whether it was smallpox or not. Her mother never quite got over it; the child was so sweet and young.

The wagon used to stand in the street before a suspect house, with children playing around it. The police seemed to run the whole thing, and would carry bedding out of the houses and leave it to be burned in the street. We were told that the very poor used to steal this bedding at night. Of course we were vaccinated, but it did not take. The last performances of the season were abandoned, as every one was afraid of crowded places, and I left for Berlin on business. While there my throat became

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frightfully sore, and of course I thought, "Aha! I have it!" And of course I didn't have it. I returned worn out to Paris and rested there.

About this time I went first to Jean de Reszke. His beautiful house, near the *Bois*, with its little theatre, was the scene of much nervousness and struggles to become *prime donne*. The master opened my eyes to the beauties of style. His Wagner, better than the best Wagnerian singer I have ever heard, his French style, the wonderfully Italian and yet manly interpretations he gave the Puccini and Verdi rôles, were all a marvellous inspiration to me. With a pupil he considered intelligent he would take no end of trouble, and a "*Bien*" from him was a jewel above price. The tales de Reszke pupils sometimes tell me of the wonderful things he told them and predicted for them have always amused me, because in all the time I have been in his studio I have never heard anything like it.

I was so infatuated by my work with him, and so humbled at the vista of endless effort it opened before me, before his ideas could be carried out in every tone one sang, that I asked him one day if I should not spend the next winter in his studio, and leave the stage for a year. He thought it over seriously, and advised me to go on with the stage work, for the rou-

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time I was getting was as valuable a teacher as he was. It would have been a great privilege to have spent an entire year with him, and if I could have afforded it, I should have done so.

## CHAPTER XIV

### DISCOURAGEMENTS THAT LEAD TO A COURT THEATRE

THE second year of my first engagement was drawing to a close, and I was much exercised over the next step. I wanted to try for one of the *Hoftheaters*, not the very largest and most famous, but a place with a good orchestra and carefully prepared productions. There seemed to be no vacancy in just such a theatre, and my agent offered me a contract for a great *Stadttheater*, probably the first municipal opera house in Germany. Their contralto, who was a great favourite, had a contract for a big Royal Opera, and they felt sure she would be engaged. With some misgivings, I signed the *Vertrag*, and then began the long dickering to arrange the guest performances which should decide my fate. They finally asked me to sing *Azucena* at an afternoon performance. It had taken so long to find a date which suited us both, that a good deal of time had elapsed between the signing of the contract and their letter. I, of course, refused to sing an afternoon

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performance, and it was finally arranged that I should sing *Carmen* on a certain date. There is a sort of unwritten law that they shall choose one part, and you another, but it is not always observed. This difficulty over the rôle should have warned me that there was something wrong. Such a disagreement is a pretty good indication that your contract will not be made *perfekt*.

I travelled all night, and arrived to find a rehearsal on the same day as the performance. It was what is called an *Arrangier Probe fuer den Gast*, rehearsal without orchestra, of the scenes in which the "Guest" takes part. All the colleagues were nice to me, but I saw the contralto watching from the wings, and she gave me a dagger glare; so I thought that there was "something rotten in the state of Denmark," as she was supposed to be leaving voluntarily. I sang well that night, and had a real success with the audience, and with my colleagues. They all said to me, "Oh, you are certainly engaged after a hit like that." But I felt a premonition which increased to a certainty when I heard that the Director had not troubled to watch my performance, but had left the theatre in the middle of the first act.

I left the next morning, and in a day I received a letter from the Director saying that I had not had quite enough experience to sing their repertoire. I

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learned some time afterwards that their contralto had sung one of her guest-performances before I went there, had failed to make a sufficient impression, and had decided to remain where she was. This had been settled between her and the Direction before I sang at all; still they had let me sing with no prospect of an engagement, and allowed it to appear to be my fault that I was not engaged. Legally, of course, they were quite within their rights, as I could have sued them if they had not given me a chance to sing the *Gastspiel* called for in my contract. But any singer, in such circumstances, would infinitely prefer to be told the facts. Later, I once begged a director to tell me if it were really worth while to *gastieren* in his opera house. He said, certainly, they were not considering any one else and really wanted to hear me. I sang there with one of the biggest personal successes I have ever made, the *Bürgermeister* and all the Committee (it was a municipal theatre managed by a Committee with the Mayor at the head) came on the stage to congratulate me, and I had to take nine curtain calls alone after the last act. I was not engaged, however, and found out that they had already decided to engage a contralto who had sung one *Gastspiel* before me and the other directly afterwards. This sort of thing happens even to the most experienced native-born singer. One tenor in D. sang

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a guest performance *auf Engagement*, and learned that he was the seventh who had tried for that position in the same part, and they kept on their original one after all! Of course, these performances are paid, but the fact that one has sung without being engaged becomes known everywhere through the weekly theatrical paper, which gives the repertoire and singers in each opera, of all the reputable opera houses in Germany. But the fact that the management never intended to engage you is not generally known. If you have bad luck like this three or four times, it injures your standing as an artist. The *Genossenschaft* or stage society is trying to make each theatre confine itself to issuing only one contract at a time to fill any vacancy they may have, which will largely prevent this evil.

A second disappointment followed right on the heels of the first one. I had a second string to my bow, as there was a vacancy in a very good *Stadttheater* for which I was anxious to try. I opened negotiations with them through my agent, and after the usual delay arranged the *Gastspiels*. Their contralto was also leaving voluntarily. I was to sing the two *Erδας* and *Ulrica* in the "Masked Ball." When I got there, I found this changed to the *Erδας* and *Fricka*, which I had not sung for a year. Then they demanded *Frau Reich* in "Merry Wives" without a

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rehearsal instead of the "Siegfried" *Erda*. I was very unhappy, for I knew from this that things were going badly, and that they had no intention of engaging me, no matter how or what I sang. The Direction wrote me that, in spite of my great talents, my voice was not quite large enough for their house. The truth was that their contralto, who was a Jewess and therefore of the same religion as most of the committee, had been offered an increase of salary to remain, and had accepted. The Direction themselves felt badly over the way they had treated me, and the *Intendant* telephoned to a *Hoftheater*, not far off, where he knew there was going to be a vacancy, to recommend me to their Director in the highest terms.

This was Darmstadt, the capital of a small principality, famous for its opera house, which had existed for a hundred years. It is a town of about 100,000 inhabitants, and the residence of the reigning Grand Duke, Ernst Ludwig. His mother had been the Princess Alice of England, daughter of Queen Victoria. He and his second wife, Eleanore, lived with their two little sons at the palace Princess Alice's money had built for them. It was really not a palace at all, but a large, roomy, comfortable house. His beautiful sister, Alexandra, married the Czar of Russia; another sister married the Kaiser's brother, Prince Henry of Prussia.

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The opera house, called *Hoftheater*, stood high in the second class. In the first class are Berlin, Vienna, Dresden and Munich, with possibly Hamburg. Then come Cologne, Frankfurt and Leipsic, and the *Hoftheaters* Hanover, Stuttgart, Mannheim, Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, etc. In the third class are the smaller *Hoftheaters* like Coburg, and the *Stadttheaters* like Mainz. In the fourth, are the smallest *Stadttheaters*, and last of all come the little towns which have *Monatsoper*, or a one month season of opera in the year, after the seven month theatres are closed. The first class houses are open all the year, with a four or six weeks' vacation for the singers at different times, so that they shall not all be away together. The next class has a nine months' season, but in the *Hoftheaters* the salary is paid in monthly instalments for twelve months in the year.

I took the train for the town, not caring much whether they wanted me or not. Perhaps that was the right attitude, for after hearing one song with piano accompaniment, the *Intendant* offered me a five-year contract. I asked them to make it three; the town seemed so small and quiet that I did not like the sound of five years in it. The salary was the highest they had ever paid a contralto. The Director said at once, "How much did they offer you in ——?" and agreed to pay me only 500 marks a year less. I ar-

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ranged to *gastieren* very soon in *Carmen*, with *Nancy* and one other part to follow. I sang only the *Carmen* on trial, however, as the Grand Duke, who had come in especially from his country place to hear me, engaged me personally after the first act. I had a wonderful and rare chance to "be grand" when the Director told me this. He asked me if I would be willing to sing my other *Gastspiel* of *Nancy*. I replied loftily that I really could not do so, as I must return to Paris.

Six days before the opening of the season, according to contract, I arrived with my sister in the town which was to be my home for the next three years. It is surrounded by forests and looked very pretty; but oh! so quiet! The *Hoftheater* stands in a park, and is a classic-looking structure seating 1,400 persons. It has been there for a hundred years, and runs by clockwork. A building behind it, more than half as large as the theatre itself, contains the ballet school and scene-painting lofts and a complete dressmaking and tailoring establishment, with the wardrobe mistress and master at the head, where all costumes are made. They are also kept here, and the collection is a very complete one, with endless sets of uniforms, armour and historical costumes of all kinds. Men's dress is supplied; women who have a salary of more than 3600 marks (\$900) are supposed to supply their

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own, but if you are nice to the wardrobe mistress she will usually contrive to find what you want, though you must get permission from the Direction to wear it. Excellent dressers are provided for the principals, and a hair-dresser to put on your wig. There is a small charge if it requires dressing. The theatre pays these people, but you are supposed to tip them on New Year's Day, also the stage doorkeeper, the man who brings you the scores of your parts, and any one else you like, though only the first four expect it; and 10 marks (\$2.50) is a liberal tip. You are expected to keep your costumes at home, and send them over in a basket-trunk on the morning of the performance for your dresser to unpack, press and hang up. You pay a man \$1.00 a month to do this, though many singers send their servant.

There are four Kapellmeisters, the first one who rejoiced in the title of *Hofrat* (Court councillor), the second, and third, and a fourth for the chorus. Felix Weingartner is now first conductor there. The orchestra consists of sixty musicians, and is really good. They have played together so long, that they can play almost anything, and they excel in Mozart, whom, with Wagner, they adore, while they look with condescension upon the works of Puccini. The scenery of this particular opera house used to be famous. They were the first to have moons which really rose

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about as slowly as the real one, and they are still unique in possessing a wonderful clock-work sun, which contracts as it rises. The *Ring* dramas, with their complicated settings, are given without a single hitch; the "Magic Flute" is presented with some nineteen scenes, all dark changes; and this is one of the four theatres in the world where Goethe's "Faust" is given entire, on four consecutive evenings. The artist, Kempin, who is responsible for all new scenery, is a man of considerable reputation, outside the town as well as in it, as a painter. He does excellent things when he is allowed a free hand, as he inclines very strongly toward modern *styliziert* (conventionalized) scenery *à la Reinhardt*. His production of "La Belle Hélène" was worth seeing, and his "Gretchen's room" in "Faust" is one of the most charming stage settings I have ever seen.

There is a large, thoroughly trained chorus, each with a repertoire of over fifty operas, whose members are paid, as a rule, about 125 marks a month (\$26), everything but modern dress supplied. None receives more, except those who fill small "speaking parts." In a ballet of forty the dancers receive from 75 to 80 marks apiece with all costumes furnished. Knowing these figures, as I do, it is hard for me to credit those I once saw quoted in a music journal from a German book on the subject. The author

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stated that the ballet girls in Hanover receive only 10 marks (\$2.50) a month. Hanover, being a larger city and affiliated with Berlin pays better salaries than this opera house of which I am writing. He also said that the "leading lady" in Eisenach had only 15 marks a month! As I, as a beginner and foreigner, in Metz, received \$35 a month, I cannot but think that he had forgotten to add the cipher and meant 150 marks! The costume expenses that he spoke of, are certainly a great tax upon the German *actresses* in smaller theatres; but I think I have shown how greatly the wardrobe of a *singer* in such a theatre may be simplified, especially by a thrifty German woman, up to all the dodges of different pairs of sleeves for the same gown. After all, costume expenses are as high or as low as one makes them. None of our American girls thinks of becoming an actress on the European stage, so these costume expenses need not trouble her personally, and the majority of German actresses manage to live on their earnings. The principals in my theatre received from \$900 to \$3500 a year, which last named sum is paid to the *Heldentenor*, and on which he is rich. The rent of a good flat is 700-800 marks a year (\$180-\$200). I paid 1100 marks (\$275) for mine because it was situated on the best street, near the palace. It contained four rooms, with kitchen, bath, maid's room and two balconies. A

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good general servant receives 25 marks a month (\$6.24). Her wages and everything about her are regulated by police inspection. The *Polizei*, in fact, regulates the whole town, even the closing of the theatre, which can only be shut in case of destruction by fire, serious epidemic or martial law.

The same system of alternating plays with opera obtains in all but the very largest German cities. We had some splendid actors in our cast, some of whom are now in leading positions in the greatest theatres. The repertoire, for a town of 100,000 people, is extraordinary. The German classics, Goethe and Schiller, alternate with Shakespeare; the modern poetic dramas, the plays of Hebbel, Grillpartzer, the sparkling comedies of Schnitzler are interchanged with translations of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, Pinero, etc. Sudermann and Hauptmann may follow the latest French salon comedy, or a new farce; and the good old ones that everybody knows like "Kyritz Pyritz," and "Charley's Aunt" are not allowed to die. Then there are peasant plays in dialect and fairy plays for the children at Christmas.

## CHAPTER XV

### SALARIES AND A TENOR'S GENIUS

**I**F you make a hit with the audience your residence in the town is made very pleasant. Even the conductors and motormen of the street cars used to greet me as they passed and all the policemen were my friends. I had letters to some of the people in the town through relations, and took as much part as I had time for in the really charming, if slightly narrow, social life of the place. The centre of everything was, of course, the Court. The Grand Duke took a great interest in the theatre, and used to watch the productions notebook in hand. Any detail which did not please him was immediately noted and sent then and there to the stage manager to be changed. We had some special privileges as we were classed as *Beamten* or official servants of the government. One was the right to wine from the ducal cellars at cost price, or duty free. Another was a 10 per cent. discount at all the shops.

Extra money is often to be picked up by a *Gastspiel aushilfsweise*, that is, an emergency call from a

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neighbouring theatre. Our opera soubrette once received a hurry call to another *Hofoper* one hour's journey away. The train would have made her too late, so she took an automobile and her costume with her, and drove at breakneck speed through the woods to the town. She was to sing *Cherubino* in "Figaro" and, as she dressed in the auto to save time, the surprise of the chauffeur may be imagined when, instead of a brunette girl, a blond boy emerged from his car!

I made my first appearance as a regular member of the company as *Dalila*. The only comment afterwards of the first Kapellmeister, who directed the performance, was, "Why did you make the eighth note in such and such a phrase a sixteenth?" I repeat this, in order to give an idea of the standard of thoroughness with which the musical part of the opera was prepared. When we were rehearsing *Dalila* on the stage, I, having studied the rôle in Paris and being imbued with the spirit of the French performers, occasionally gave that swing from the hips on a particularly luscious phrase, using as faithfully as I could remember it de Reszke's masterly interpretation and flow of line. The *Hofrat* rapped on his desk, and half patronizingly, half contemptuously, with a pitying smile, bade me not indulge in *franzoesische Maniere*—French mannerisms. As many room rehears-

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als were held as were necessary before the singers could sing their parts, giving every note its exact value. A singer might make mistakes during the performance, but the *Hofrat* always mentioned it afterwards. My *Samson* was, of course, the *Heldentenor*, and he was a character; a tall, good-looking man, with an immense, ill-used voice, but a wonderful actor. He had a great success with the ladies, and his adventures, matrimonial and otherwise, were the principal source of gossip of the town. His lady-love at this time was a certain Baroness, whom he afterwards married. Their great amusement was rushing about the country together in a white automobile filled with flowers. She used to hang fascinated over the edge of her box, high above the stage, watching his every look and gesture, her large bust on the edge of the box. When he left the stage she would sink back in her chair, really exhausted, and rub her eyes with her hand. He was the only person who was allowed to disturb the orderly rehearsals. Every one was afraid of him when he lost his temper and raged up and down the stage, shouting what he would do to his enemy when he caught him. One day, I remember, he was furious with the *Intendant* because birthday honours had been distributed by the Grand Duke, in the form of decorations, and he had received none. He made sure that it was the *Intendant's* spite against

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him, but it was in reality, of course, his notorious way of living that prevented his being decorated. He shouted that he would "buy himself two cents' worth of soft soap and grease his back with it and make the *Intendant* climb up it!" Then that he would get him in the woods and run his auto over him, and run it back and forth, and back and forth, until there was nothing left but apple sauce! Finally the Direction could stand him no longer, great actor as he was, and his contract was broken on the pretext of his having been absent from the town without leave. You are supposed not to go further than a certain stated distance from the theatre without due notification and permission. He left the place with his Baroness, and his return to it was characteristic. The first time that Zeppelin's airship passed over the town, he was in it, hanging out of the car, shouting and throwing down postcards!

As *Siegfried* in "Goetterdaemmerung," he left an ineffaceable impression on me. I have never seen it equalled by any tenor. When he gazes at *Brünnhilde's* ring, and his memory fails to recall just what it means to him, his puzzled look of baffled memory, the ray of understanding that almost pierced his forgetfulness, all were suggested in so tremendous a way that one saw inside his brain,—and all this utterly without exaggerated mannerisms.

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I seemed to find favour in his sight, and during the *Dalila* rehearsals he made hot love to me. In the performance, when *Dalila* sinks into his arms on the couch, he nearly upset me by saying fervently out loud: "*Ach! endlich weiss man was est ist ein schoenes Weib im Arm zu haben!*" ("Ah! at last one knows what it is to have a beautiful woman in one's arms.") I considered this a distinct reflection on his adoring Baroness, and withheld the signs of delight he no doubt expected. He told me once, one only wish he had,—just to see my *Spinne*, or *lingerie* closet. One day, as we were all in the greenroom, during a rehearsal, waiting our turn to be called to the stage, I saw S——'s eyes transfixed with horror. Looking in the direction he pointed I saw the opera soubrette Z——, putting on her rubbers and crossing her legs in doing so. This action revealed to our delighted gaze trouserettes of red striped canton flannel, shirred into a band half way between calf and ankle, and there adorned with a blanket-stitched frill of the same material. S—— was too sickened by the sight to do more than helplessly gasp, "Typical!" to me. A curious person; fastidious, sensual, unquestionably endowed with genius, he just couldn't behave.

He was asked to sing *Siegfried* once, at a neighbouring opera house, on very short notice. He had

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to dress in the train in order to be there on time when the curtain went up. Fellow travellers, who saw him enter the train dressed in the ordinary way, were rather horrified to see a half-naked savage emerge at the journey's end; but S—— was quite impervious to the sensation he created. He never wore the hideous tights most *Siegfrieds* try to make you think are skin, but his splendid shoulders rose naked from his bearskin, and his bare legs were bound with furry thongs.

The *Heldenbariton* was of another type. He had been twenty-five years on the stage, and twenty in this theatre. Opera singing for him was like going to his office. He had his house with a charming garden, his family, and a circle of friends and acquaintances, which included nearly the whole population. There are many cases like his in this class of theatre, and a pleasant life they lead. After eight years in the same *Hoftheater* they are eligible for a pension, a certain proportion of their salary, which increases with their years of service, up to a fixed point. Only certain *Hoftheaters* have this pension fund; it is very nice for some singers, but a great hardship for others. If you leave that theatre before your eight years are up, you lose all that you have paid during your engagement. Contribution to the pension fund is compulsory for all singers and actors in that theatre. One singer whom

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I knew had spent sixteen years in different theatres, always paying a pension tax, and never receiving the benefit of one penny from the money, as her engagement in each place came to an end before the stipulated eight years. Unscrupulous directors take advantage of this to fail to renew a singer's contract when it gets near the eighth year. The invaluable *Genossenschaft* is also trying to remedy this abuse.

Some of the regular members of a *Hoftheater* have enviable concert reputations as well, though in Germany the two professions are quite separate, and concert singing is generally looked upon as the higher branch of art. The critics are suspicious of the opera singer in concert, to such an extent that I was advised, at my first Berlin recital, to keep my real standing in the profession dark and present myself without my title of *Hofopernsängerin*. I suggested to my agent that, as I was quite unknown in Berlin, it might be well to spend a little money in extra advertising. "Advertising?" said he, "they will think you are a soap!" So I sang unheralded except by the usual half-inch in the daily papers. In contrast to the publicity campaigns and press-agents of this country, let me give another instance of how they did things in Germany before the war. On being engaged at this *Hoftheater*, I thought I ought to let the public know it. I wrote my agent, Herr Harder, asking him to

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spend 1000 marks (\$250) for me in judicious advertising of my engagement. He answered that there was no way in which he could place the money to further my interests, and returned it! The first contract which was offered me for a concert tour in America, provided for \$2,000 to be paid down for advertising before the tour began.

## CHAPTER XVI

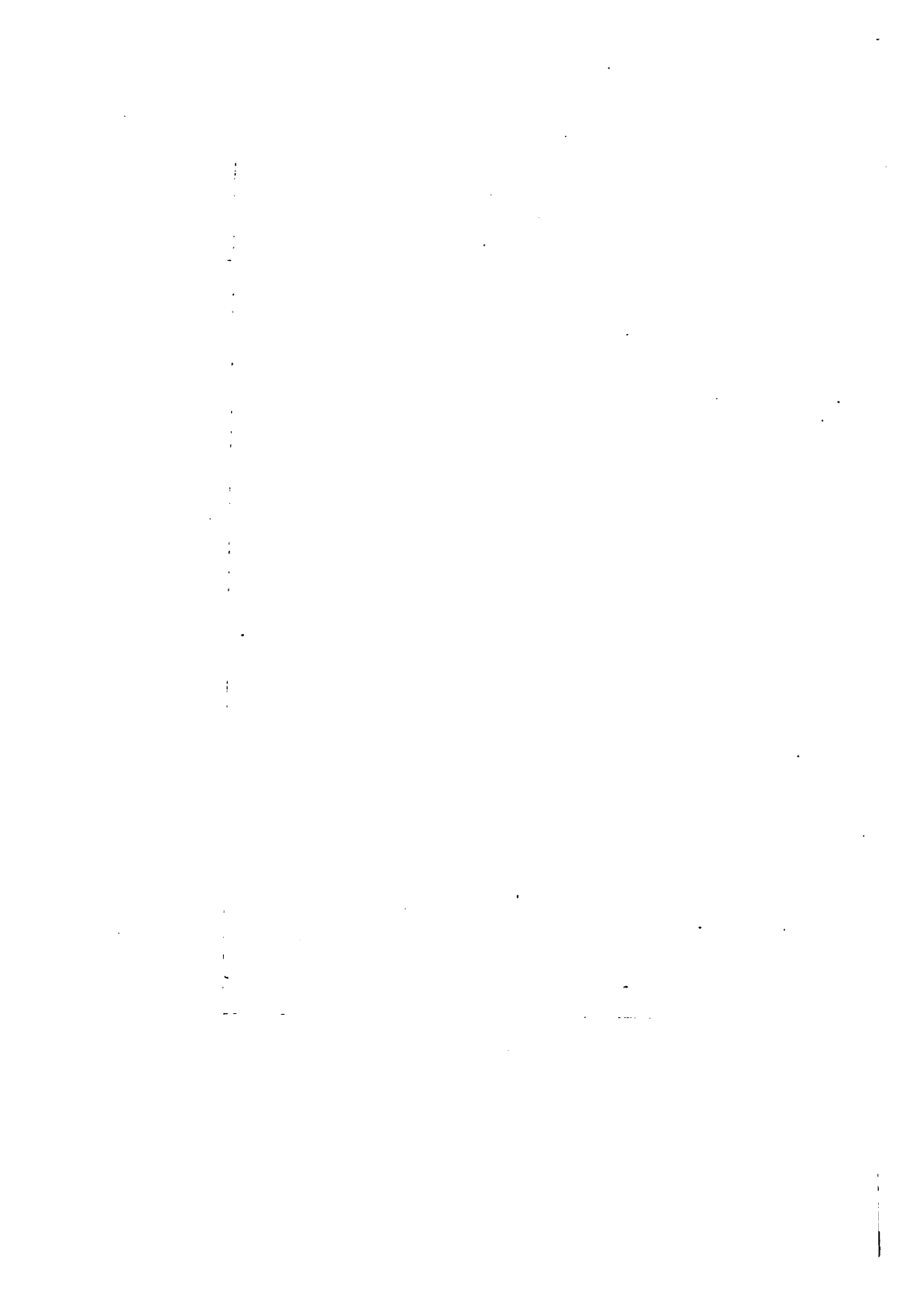
### THE ART OF MARIE MUELLE

ONE factor in my success was the beautiful wardrobe I was enabled to have through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Frank S. Jones. The first clothes I ordered from Marie Muelle in Paris, the summer before I went to Metz, I left entirely to her. She showed me designs and had bolts of wonderful shimmering silks unrolled for my inspection, and brought out boxes of curious embroideries, which she kept for her special friends. The *Amneris* and *Dalila* costumes she made me were very French of that period of the *Comique*; pale pinks and greens and everything in long wigs. I wore them a few seasons, but as I grew more in knowledge I did not feel at all Egyptian in pink *crêpe de Chine*, nor Syrian in pale green. My brother Cecil and I love the Egyptian part of the Louvre, and have spent hours there together. We found a fascinating bronze princess of the right period, which we proceeded to try and copy for me for *Amneris*.

We were staying out of town at Giverny, the artist



DALILA AS I USED TO DRESS IT



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colony made famous by Monet, Macmonnies, Friesicke, the A. B. Frost family and many artist friends. I had a big studio with my brother, and he made huge designs of the wings the princess used for her skirt, pinning them on the wall of the studio, then colouring them in the tones of the mummy cases, allowing for their fading through the ages. These designs we took to Muelle, who was most enthusiastic. We worked hard and long on that costume, getting the headdress just right, and making it practical as well as correct. The jewelry I made myself, from wooden beads painted the right colour and in the rue de Rivoli I found just the right Egyptian charms and figures of blue earthenware to hang on the necklace. My wig maker could not seem to satisfy me, so I finally took a short-haired black wig, and braided into it one hundred strands, made of lustreless wool. The dress seemed to lack something when on, so I twisted ropes of turquoise beads round the wrists and the blue accented the whole.

The *Dalila* clothes I had been wearing then seemed hopelessly pale, washy and conventional, so we hunted the shops of Berlin and Paris for vivid embroideries and searched museums for Syrian women. They did not seem at all popular, though we found magnificent reliefs of men. Taking these as a basis, we built some barbaric robes of scarlet and purple,

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added a fuzzy short black wig, and I felt much more "like it." I found a necklace of silver chains with clumps of turquoise matrix, in Darmstadt, and had a headdress made to match it. A comparison of the *Amneris* and *Dalila* photos will show how one's sense of costuming develops.

We bought all the books on the subject we could find, and studied them for hours. We cut out reproductions of historic portraits and invested largely in photos in the different art galleries we haunted, and pasted them into scrap books. Caps and headdresses have always interested me intensely. The one I wear in "Meistersinger" I copied from a portrait in Antwerp. The Norwegian one I wear as *Mary* in "Fliegender Hollaender" I bought in Norway, together with the rest of my costume.

Nothing gives such character to a silhouette as a characteristic head, and having to do endless old women, I could give them all just as endless changes of headgear. A comparison of the photos will also show how one grows into the rôle with years of playing, and how one's eyes "come to," how one develops histrionically—how the silhouette acquires snap and vim and carrying power at a distance, and outlines become crisp and authoritative.

My first *Carmen* clothes were very *Opéra Comique* and not at all Spanish gipsy. I studied the Spanish

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cigarette girls and those of gipsy blood as carefully as possible, and my idea of the rôle changed naturally. I went to Muelle one summer, and told her that I was no longer happy in satin princess dresses. She said that Zuloaga had just designed and superintended the making of Breval's clothes for the *Comique's* real Spanish revival of *Carmen*. She could duplicate these for me as she knew just where to send in Spain for the flowered cottons in garish colours, and the shot silk scarfs that Zuloaga had imported for Breval. I was delighted at this and adapted the costumes to my needs, using the last one exactly as Zuloaga had intended, with the huge red comb, made specially in Spain.

When I sang *Carmen* before Prince Henry of Prussia in Darmstadt, he sent word to me that my skirts were too long, no Spanish woman wore them so long. I knew, however, that they were the right length, and any one can see by studying Zuloaga's paintings that the soubrette length skirt is not worn on the proud, swinging hips of the Spanish girl. I have been told by Spaniards that I am an exact reproduction of a Spanish gipsy as *Carmen*, which shows my studies were not in vain. People have said that Merimée's and Bizet's *Carmen* is not Spanish, and perhaps they are right; but in aiming to portray a Spaniard, what model can one take but a real one?

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My *Orfeo* clothes I have never changed. The *crêpe de chine* for them was imported by Mounet-Sully for one of his characters, and Muelle gave me the piece that was left over. Its beautiful creamy colour and thick softness cannot be improved upon, to my mind.

Marie Muelle is now the first operatic costumer of the world. This reputation she has built unaided through her own unfailing energy. Through her rooms pass the most fabulous-priced opera singers, the greatest actors, the stage beauties, famous managers, producers, and designers, the ladies of the great world seeking costumes for wonderful private *fêtes*—and gentlemen seeking the ladies—all the varied crowd of many nationalities to whom the old childish pastime of “dressing up” is a business or a pleasure.

The present establishment in the rue de la Victoire is quite impressive. The hall is usually half-filled with the trunks of “Muelle artists” engaged in America, who bring their things into New York in bond to avoid paying the ruinous customs charges, and are therefore forced to go through the weary round of dispatching the same old stage wardrobe out of the country and bringing it back again every season. Even when the clothes are quite reduced to shreds and patches the rags have to be elaborately packed, identified by lynx-eyed officials, and sent at least outside

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the three-mile limit of the American Continent to be thrown away!

The first big white reception room of the Maison contains a long table usually littered with samples, some chairs, and a large mirror lit like that of a star's dressing room. There is a mantelpiece covered with photographs of singers of all grades of celebrity, each dedicated with a message of admiring affection to Marie Muelle. Around the wall are various *armoires*, one containing a library of works on costume, another a glittering collection of stage jewelry, a third many portfolios of water-colour designs for every sort and kind of theatrical garment for every rôle.

Oh! those designs! A young soprano has won an engagement in Monte Carlo and wants a stage wardrobe for her repertoire. Out comes the "Modern French" portfolio with a bewildering series of blonde and sinuous *Thaïses*, Moyen-Age *Mélisandes*, a scintillating *Ariane* in contrast to a demure little work-a-day *Louise*; and the lady spends a delightful afternoon in selecting her favourites.

Then Muelle sends for an armful of samples—

"*Crêpe de chine*, of course, for the *Thaïs*. Yes, in flesh pink with plenty of embroidery. Here is an *échantillon*"—and she pins it to the drawing.

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The singer picks out a scrap of heavy, lustrous crêpe—

“No, not that quality. That is something special, and there is no more to be had for love or money.”

Colours and fabrics are decided upon, all tested for becomingness under the bunched electric lights, which mimic the strong light of the stage. Each design has an assortment of tags of material pinned where many others have been pinned before. Muelle is an expert in colours for the stage. She doesn't talk learnedly of synthetic dyes, processes, or German competition, but she can give you a bright blue that is warranted to stay blue, no matter what vagaries of lighting a stage manager may indulge in.

Her pale colours never turn insipid, nor her dark ones muddy. She keeps a special dyeing establishment busy with her orders alone, and twenty-four hours seems time enough to obtain any shade known to the palette.

The textiles once chosen, Camille is called to “take measures” and arrange for the fittings.

“And now, one question,” says Mademoiselle, “Is your stage level, or does it slope towards the back? Very well, that is all.”

When the singer arrives for her first trying-on, the fitting room is filled with lengths of material, and Mademoiselle herself stands in the midst, brandish-

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ing a huge pair of shears. She throws a length of silk over one of your shoulders, puts in two pins, and bunching the material in her left hand, gives a slash with the scissors in her right, with a recklessness that makes you shudder. A pull here, a fold there, two more pins—and the stuff hangs as almost no one else can make it hang, accentuating a good figure and disguising a poor one.

Occasionally in filling a regular order she will stumble upon an unusual effect. One day they were making Moyen-Age sleeves for the dress of a well-known singer whom Mlle. Muelle has gowned for years, but who has never been included in the list of her special favourites. The sleeve was of slashed silvery grey, lined with cerise, the lining showing on the edges. She picked up a bit of cloth of silver and pulled it through the slashes. The effect charmed her.

*"Tenez!"* she said, "That is too good for her. We'll keep that for La Belle Geraldine."

"La Belle Geraldine," as Miss Farrar is known in Paris, is one of Muelle's most constant patrons. Ever since her Berlin days she has been costumed by the Maison Muelle, and she stands very high in the list of Mademoiselle's favourites.

The outer room may contain the photographs of celebrities great and small, but in the inner room there

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are just two—a portrait of Miss Farrar as *Elizabeth* and one of myself as *Carmen*.

Opening off the main reception and fitting rooms are others lined with *armoires* and stacks of boxes running to the ceiling. Then come the rooms for cutting and sewing, and the embroidery rooms. Muelle uses quantities of solid embroidery and *appliqué* work, where other costumers are content with stenciling and gilding. She has the secret of a metal thread that does not tarnish. Her idea is that the use of first-class materials, good silks and satins, real velvets is a necessity in these days of electric lighting, which is as revealing as sunlight; that the substitution of imitation fabrics went out with the use of gas in the theatre, and that the superior wearing qualities alone of the best materials justify the greater expense.

The capacity of her *armoires* and the size of the accumulated collections they contain were tested some years ago by the special production of Strauss's "Salomé" at the Châtelet Theatre in Paris, when Muelle was called upon, at ridiculously short notice, to furnish all costumes for a cast of 150 people. There was a royal ransacking of cupboards and jewel cabinets, but everything was ready on time for the dress rehearsal.

A greater feather in her cap was the order to costume the new productions of the Russian Ballet, from



DALILA AS I NOW DRESS IT



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designs by no less a personage than the great Leon Bakst himself. Then ensued a dyeing of silks and a printing of chiffons, a stringing of breads and knotting of fringes which set the whole establishment humming like a beehive.

For all their thousand problems, the costumes were finished and delivered at the appointed time.

Since that triumph there has been hardly an important costume event in all Paris in which Muelle has not had a share, if not entire charge. She costumed Astruc's first season in the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. She has been responsible for the costuming of many productions of the Russian Ballet, and for great spectacles like Debussy's "St. Sebastien" and "La Pisanelle" of D'Annunzio. Society knows her as well as the stage, for she has been the presiding genius at many an exquisite fête, Greek, Roman, or Persian, held in lovely gardens behind the prosaic exteriors of exclusive Parisian homes.

But all this has not turned her head, nor changed her toward her old friends. She still loves a good gossip. Many a note have we had from her—"I am delighted that Mademoiselle is returning to Paris, and hope that she will come to see me. I have quantities of stories to tell her, and we shall die of laughing."

But though she enjoys a choice tidbit, she will tol-

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erate no malicious tale-bearing. She refused an order, tactfully and firmly, from one singer because the lady tried to tell tales out of school against one of Muelle's chosen favourites. Her revenge in this case was typical. She knows that advancing age is the enemy *par excellence* of popularity for stage people, so she makes a point of always referring to the delinquent as "La Mère So-and-So!"

The list of her kindnesses to artists is unending. One case that I now of personally is typical. A girl with an unusually beautiful voice had arranged a début, leading to a first engagement, and she ordered her wardrobe from Muelle. She failed to be engaged after her début, however, and one disappointment after another came to her, so that it seemed impossible for her to make a start at all. But Muelle had faith in her, and kept the beautiful clothes, unpaid for, hanging in her presses for several years. At last the girl made a great hit in Russia, and is now a well-known singer, and, needless to say, a faithful adherent of the Maison Muelle. This is only one instance of the kind, and, of course, there are many, many more in which Mademoiselle's kindness does not find a monetary reward.

Often have I heard her suggesting economy to those whose salaries are not in the "fabulous" class. She will show a girl how to costume two rôles, with the

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same dresses, by combinations and changes so cleverly thought out that the keenest public won't detect them. *Elizabeth* and *Elsa* may wear the same mantle, right side out in one rôle and wrong side out in the other. An extra tabard of brocade or embroidery will allow an *Ophelia* to wear the gowns of *Marguerite*—all tricks of the trade, and well understood in the Maison Muelle.

Brilliantly clever, immensely capable, good-natured, and big-hearted, a splendid organizer and the faithfulest of friends, Marie Muelle has earned by the hardest of hard work, and now justly enjoys her title of "First Theatrical Costumer," not only of Paris, but of the world.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE NON-MILITARY SIDE OF A GERMAN OFFICER'S LIFE

ONE of the first things you do on arriving at a new residence in Germany is to acquaint the police of your presence. This is called *Anmeldung*. It is a fearsome experience and admits of no trifling. You go to the appointed stuffy office, and tell your nationality, birthplace with date of birth, your parents' names, their profession if any, and your own, their birthplaces and ages, if they are dead and what they died of, whether you are married or single, number, names and ages of your children, and any little extra detail that may occur to the official in Prussian blue who holds the inquisition. If you have an unusual name, he won't believe you when you claim it. A girl I knew was christened Jean, but she is down in the police records of Berlin as Johanna, because her policeman said that Jean was a man's name, and French at that!

Every servant maid has a book, which must be signed by the police when you engage her, and when

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she leaves you, before she may take another place. When you engage her she must be *angemeldet* too, in order that she may be charged with her proper insurance tax. This amounts to about five dollars a year; the employer pays one-half, the servant the other. Many employers pay it all. This entitles the servant to treatment at the dispensary or in the hospital if she is ill. The police are very careful of her comfort, and pay a visit to the house in which she is employed to see that her room is big enough, airy enough, warmed in winter, and that her bed is comfortable! She has a long list of "rights" including so many loaves of black bread and so many bottles of beer per week; and she dare not be offended if you keep everything under lock and key.

You have not yet finished your *Anmeldung* if you keep a dog, for he must be registered, too, and you pay highly for the luxury. The *Polizei* decides when you may and may not play on your piano or sing. Before nine in the morning, after nine at night, all musical instruments are taboo. The sacred sleeping hour after dinner, from two to four, must also be observed in silence in Berlin. Nothing dare interfere with the after-dinner nap; even the banks are closed from one to two, or even three. You write to the *Polizei* in Germany where the Englishman writes to the *Times*. I remember a perfect avalanche of

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anonymous cards in Darmstadt because a child in our house would practise with her windows open and neighbours thought it was the *Hofopernsaengerin* Howard.

The intricacies of paying your taxes take some study. Foreigners must pay taxes on money earned in the country; town and county taxes are payable every three months, on alternate months, in two different parts of the town. You arrive at the *Staedtische Halle* to pay your town taxes, and you are very lucky if, after picking out the right month, you succeed in hitting the day when the place is open. A small sign on the locked door may greet you: "Closed on the ninth and fifteenth of every month." If day and month are right, you may easily strike the wrong hour, for town taxes are payable, say, from eight to ten A. M., and two to five P. M., while county ones are from nine to twelve, and four to seven. There are church taxes besides, very small if you are Catholic and larger if you are Evangelical. I succeeded in getting out of these by declaring myself neither. Unfortunately I did not know the word for undenominational and so had to say that we were "heathen." My sister was asked in a rasping official voice, filled with the large contempt for women which a certain type of German official always reeks with, "*Sind Sie ledig?*" She, poor dear, had never heard "*ledig*"

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before, and stammered "*Was?*" The question was rapped out again, and she said, "*Ich—weiss nicht.*" When she got home and looked up *ledig*, she found the man had been asking if she were married or single. What he made of her answer we never knew.

All these little things are very amusing in Germany. The way everything seems *verboten*, at first is annoying, but later amusing. The paths in the Tiergarten in Berlin always used to tempt me to be bad. I always wanted to walk on the path reserved for bicyclists, or horses, or sit on the benches reserved for children only. The letter boxes say to you, "*Aufschrift und Marke nicht vergessen!*" ("Address and stamp not to be forgotten!") The door mat shrieks at you, "*Bitte, Fuesse Reinigen!*" ("Please wipe your feet.") Towels, brushes, etc., all say "*Bitte*" at you. I believe one could travel all through Germany with just "*Bitte*," and get an insight into the different phases of German character through the intonations of this word.

A rather annoying custom in Darmstadt was the way the bakers over-celebrated every holiday. They had usually the "*Erster, Zweiter, und Dritter Feiertag*"—first, second and third holiday, and they toiled not on those three days. All the bread you could get, if you had neglected to provide enough, was square pretzels, baked exceptionally large and hard. This

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may have been a Darmstadt custom only, as they vary so all over Germany, that what holds good in the north may be quite unknown in the south. For instance, cream is *Sahne* in Berlin, *Rahm* in Darmstadt, and has even a third name in other parts of Germany, which I have forgotten. You can get a wonderful *Sandtorte*—a firm, delicious cake, in Berlin, but I never succeeded in getting it just right in Southern or Middle Germany.

A quaint old custom in Darmstadt was always observed on the first Sunday in Advent. The Grand Duke always did his shopping for Christmas on that day, and the country people thronged into the town. A band used to play before the shop in which the Grand Duke was, and move as he moved. We gave an extra long performance at the opera, "Goetterdaemmerung," or some such serious business, but the Grand Duke never could honour us with his presence, as every one in town would have felt cheated if he had.

The shopping in Darmstadt was really quite remarkable. We always thought it an excellent thing that after eleven o'clock in the morning not a scrap of meat was visible in the white-tiled butcher shops, everything being put away on ice.

Food is taken very seriously, of course, and asparagus is honoured above any other vegetable by

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having its own subscription season. That is, you subscribe at the beginning of the season, so much a day, and asparagus is delivered to you daily while it lasts at that price, the sum not varying with the fluctuations of the market.

The old market place was a delight on full market days. The grumpy old women would sit in the middle of their piles of fruit and vegetables, while you threaded your way along the uneven cobblestone lanes they had left in between their stalls. Brilliant awning umbrellas have been adopted and glow in the sun, against the darkly moist, old walls of the frowning castle just behind. The old Dames call out to you, "Well, Madamsche', nothing from me to-day? Aren't my things good enough for you?" "Madamsche'" is a left-over from ancient French times, and the final "n" is left off, as are all "n's" in Hessen dialect.

This dialect also lacks "r's." They tell a tale of the Railroad conductors calling out "Station Daaaaamstadt!" so loudly and persistently as to annoy Grand Ducal ears, and they were ordered to pay more attention to their "r's." Now they call out in a superior tone "Starrrrr-rtion—Damstadt!" and feel sure every one is satisfied.

We had exceptional opportunities of knowing Germans of all classes, from the cleaning women in the

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theatre to royalty. The military types are most varied, ranging from the Prussian Junker to the *gemuetlicher Bayer*, with his easy South German ways. We met many officers and their families, both in Metz and Darmstadt. In Metz, during the last year, we grew to know and be fond of a young Bavarian lieutenant. With him we drove and picnicked in the lovely Metz country. It was early spring, and we would take the train to some little village near by, and have our tea in the woods or at one of the thousands of *Gasthäuser* that dot Germany. I remember one Sunday afternoon in a still, steep-sided ravine, the walls of it rising sharply on either side, thickly wooded with giant beeches; the sun-flecked grass a-quiver with myriads of white ethereal wind-flowers. A shrine, with a blue-robed Virgin looked down on us, and the wood-hush was only broken by the songs of birds, twittering and gurgling high above us in the branches. Suddenly far off the sound of singing; and slowly a procession of children came into view, singing in well-harmonized parts as they walked. They all genuflected before the Virgin and wound off into the woods, their voices dying away in the distance.

We often studied the old battlefields, so fiercely contested in 1870, and F—— would point out to us just where the different regiments advanced and fell.

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A long way off seemed the horrors of war, and we never dreamed what much greater horrors were soon to descend on us.

We loved the Bavarians with their kind artistic souls in those days, and yet they tell me they were among the worst in the early days in Belgium.

The military spirit was rampant in Metz, of course, and we got to know that side of it well, as some of the officers had English wives, who were very good to us. The delightful manners of the officers always charmed us; we were told they are trained to social manners by their superior officers. The cavalry regiments were the smartest ones, both in Metz and Darmstadt, the Infantry being solidly artistocratic, but less dashing. The *Pioniers* (Engineers) were rather despised socially, while the poor *Train* or Commissariat, was utterly looked down upon and hardly bowed to. The Bavarian infantry has its special social standing, because the old nobility is largely represented in it. What they lack in riches they make up in pride. All the other German infantry regiments wear dark blue trousers, no matter what colour their tunics; the Bavarians, however, have stuck to their light blue trousers, in spite of all attempts to change them. The Prince Regent was famous for wearing his much too long, and very wrinkled over badly fitting boots. The smartest officers wore the

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*Ballon Muetze* (balloon cap) introduced by the Crown Prince and ineffectually forbidden by his father. It is called "balloon" because it is much higher than the ones worn by less smart officers. The height of the collar is the other important thing. In a sterling officer of the old school, it is low and comfy; the smarter you are the higher your collar. If they are fat, the two or three creases at the back of the neck above the collar, always look to me unmistakably—German.

The life they lead is in general very simple, according to our ideas. Their Casino is their meeting place in the evening, like an officers' club. Some of them are tremendously hard workers, most ambitious, and showing real interest in their men. F—— used to teach his more illiterate ones to read and write, and many were the stories he told of the thick-headed Bavarian peasants. The difference in these men, when we saw them arriving in the fall, as rookies, and after a year's training, was absolutely amazing; slumped shoulders had straightened, lower jaws had decided to connect with upper ones, and eyes focused intelligently. Each officer has his *Bursch* or private servant, who usually chooses to be one. These are treated as friends by their masters, if the latter happen to be non-Prussian in character. I said once to

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F——, "Is Karl your servant?" "No, he is *mein Freund*," he said.

An officer in Diedenhofen where we occasionally sang while I was with the Metz opera, used to send me gorgeous flowers. He had a way of sitting near the stage and applauding by flapping his handkerchief against the palm of his white kid glove, which so enraged me that I never acknowledged the flowers. One night, an ugly old contralto took my part, as I was laid up, and that was the night the officer had selected to present me with a huge basket of white azaleas and blue satin ribbon. The old dame rewarded the house in general with a false-teeth smile on receiving them over the footlights, which must have discouraged my admirer as the flowers stopped abruptly.

We quite often saw young officers very drunk on the streets in Metz, at about five in the afternoon. Asking F—— about this, we were told that it was only the young ones, if we would notice, and that they were obliged to empty their glasses, when toasted by superior officers at regimental dinners. If these gentlemen caught their eyes, as they raised their glasses, many times during the two o'clock dinner, the silly young fellows' heads naturally grew befuddled, but it was not etiquette to refuse to empty their glass.

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This custom was very hard on a *Faehnrich* or Ensign, and was later done away with.

The smartest officers had English dogcarts, and were certainly most dashing. Many clever ones in the cavalry made money out of horses, buying and selling them amongst themselves. In Darmstadt they introduced the English hunt, and wore the pink. We used to go up to Frankfort for the "gentlemen races," and often saw our own Northern cousins, whose names we knew, but whom we never had the opportunity of meeting, riding with great skill and daring. These races were much encouraged by the Kaiser, and sometimes giant Eitel-Fritz would come and look on, or the dandy Prince Schaumberg-Lippe would make his horse mince round the ring. He was a great beau and ladies' favourite and the horrible accident that has deprived him of his beauty in the battlefield, seems an impossible thing to have happened to just him.

Our friend F—— was known in his regiment as "Revolver mouth." This title he earned through his witty tongue and his habit of hitting the bull's-eye in his table conversation. His great friend, a smart young *nouveau riche*, in the most exclusive cavalry regiment, who had much more money than brains, was the butt of much goodnatured chaff from F——. One evening F—— recounted to a group of brother

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officers how S——, who was notorious for his absent-mindedness and poor memory, was seen miles away from home, galloping down a dusty road. F—— hailed him and said, "But where's your horse?" "That's true," said S—— looking down in utter astonishment, "I must have forgotten to get on him."

S—— was famous for his sharpness in choosing and trading horseflesh, and F—— used to call him on the 'phone, saying "Is this Herr S——? *Guten tag!* I am Graf Pumpnickel." Then he would elaborately arrange a rendezvous in some very public spot in Metz, at which S—— was to appear with the horse he wished to trade. Of course when poor S—— kept the appointment, only a group of jeering young rascals greeted him, and S—— never discovered who Graf Pumpnickel was, though the joke was often repeated.

The money question of the poorer officers, often proves very serious. They are forbidden to earn money in any way except by writing. They cannot marry the girl they choose unless between them they have a certain sum, a minimum; this keeps many fine young officers and charming girls from matrimony; and frequently results on the man's side in far-reaching evils of entangling affairs, and illegitimate children. An officer said to me once, he *thought* he had no children, but a pretty woman who kept a

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shop in the Cathedral Platz once sent him a baby's pillow and he never was quite sure just what that meant. The Berlin demi-mondaines are certainly fascinating creatures, dressed in the most exquisite Paris clothes, and it is easy to understand how some penniless Graf may become hopelessly involved in an affair with one of them. Officially such things are frowned on. Talking of officers' troubles one day, F—— told me that suicide was often the *only* possible solution, and for the honour of one's regiment one was sometimes expected to end one's life. An acquaintance of his had had a revolver sent him by his commanding officer as a gentle hint, on finding himself involved in a scandalous affair.

In one Bavarian regiment, if you had debts, you were liable to be summoned at literally a moment's notice before your Colonel, and ordered to pay your debts in so many days, or leave the regiment. The usual thing was then to obtain the hand in marriage of the most attractive girl you knew with the most attractive bank-account. Sometimes they disappeared to America. Frau Seebold told us once, while she was singing in New York one winter, with an Austrian prima donna, that a man applied at the door for work during a heavy fall of snow. She told him to clear it away, and then come in for his money. He came, and noticing her strong accent, asked if

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she had long left the Fatherland. On her replying "no," he burst into a flood of German, and told her his pitiful story, while she made him hot coffee and tried to comfort him. He had been a lieutenant in a smart regiment, had gotten into trouble through a brother officer betraying his trust in him, and had had to disappear to America for the honour of the regiment. The poor fellow put his head on the kitchen table and sobbed as he told her how he sank lower and lower, till finally he shovelled snow. He also told her there was a club in New York where ex-officers who were coachmen, truck drivers, or waiters by day, could be gentlemen and comrades by night. He said their crests were carved above their places on the wall, and no one could belong except those of high birth. All this was years ago, and I have no idea whether such a place still exists.

When a sudden silence falls on a party in Germany they say, "A Lieutenant pays his debts." Promotion is very slow, and to arrive at a decent income takes years. A Bavarian Colonel has only eight thousand marks a year. The equipment of an officer is very expensive; their Parade uniforms must always be spotless, and though you may wear tricot cloth every day, your parade uniform must be of finest broadcloth, and your sword knots of shining silver though a dash of rain ruins both. The scarlet

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collars are more extravagant even than the white cloth ones, as white may be cleaned at least once with gasoline, but scarlet is too delicate, and the slightest perspiration makes a lasting stain. This was all before the war, though, and perhaps the dazzling uniforms have given place for ever to dull khaki. If so Germany is the drabber, for the colour was a thing to make one's heart leap. In Darmstadt the first four rows in the orchestra were reserved for officers at reduced rates, and that beautiful border of colour always framed the stage in a brilliant band on opera nights.

In Metz the rule against appearing in "Civil" on the street was very strict, and F—— used to come to see us in a full set of tennis flannels brandishing a racket, though he had never played in his life! In Darmstadt the same strictness prevailed. A friend of ours, a Major holding a very high position, had to dodge round corners, when he was out of uniform, in case the terrible General Plueskow should see him, and order him twenty-four hours' room arrest! By the way, when General Plueskow, who was about six feet seven, was in France as a young man, the French made a quip about him, "Who is the tallest officer in the German army?" was the question, and the answer was "Plueskow, because he is *Plus que haut*."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GEESE AND GUESTS

**I** WAS on the whole very happy in Darmstadt. All the leading contralto work came to me by right, and it was brightened by an occasional rôle in operetta. They found they could use me for smart ladies in such things as "Dollar Prinzessin," and I greatly enjoyed the dancing and gaiety of those performances. We had many operas in the repertoire that are seldom or never heard of in this country, "Evangeliman," "Hans Heiling," "Sieben Schwaben," all the Lortzings, "Undine," "Wildschuetz," "Zar und Zimmermann," "Weisse Dame," etc. Such things as "Fra Diavolo," and "Lustige Weiber," were always delightful to play.

We gave "Koenigskinder" the first year it was brought out in Germany. Our clever Kempin designed charming sets for it, lit in the modern way, and the soprano, though a plain little thing, had a heavenly sympathetic voice, with a floating quality most appealing in the high part. During the *Première* at the end of the last act, just as we were

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taking our calls from an enthusiastic public, a strange bearded man stepped out of the wings and joined us. Humperdinck, of course, whom I recognized in a minute from his photos. He said nothing to any of us, and we often speculated as to why he did not. He must have been pleased with the production, or he would not have shown himself; indeed we heard he was pleased, but no word was vouchsafed us.

For our geese we had grey Pomeranian beauties and immense white birds from Italy. The Italians, besides being bigger were more numerous; they saw their opportunity to bully the Teutons within an inch of their lives, and they took it. There was a tank of real water on the stage, in which they loved to splash, but do you suppose a German goose was ever allowed to go near it? Ominous hisses kept them away, and they hated hissing as all actors do. The foreigners gobbled up all the food, before the others could get it, and the only time that there was any unanimity among them was when they were doing something they should not. One night the largest Italian stepped into a depression near the footlights, caught his foot, squawked loudly and passed on. The second largest immediately followed suit; there were eleven of them, and they all in turn caught a foot, squawked and waddled on, to the great de-

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light of the audience. It was agonizing for us on the stage, waiting for each squawk.

Animals were always a trial to the performers, though considered to lend a sure magnificence from the manager's point of view. We used to have a pack of hounds in the first act finale of "Tannhäuser." They always behaved beautifully and were allowed to run without leashes. One night, however, our little round *Souffleuse*, as the prompter is called, named "Bobberle" by the tenor as she was as broad as she was long, had taken her bread and sausages into her tiny pen. The dogs suddenly winded this, made a dive for the *Souffler Kasten* (prompter's box), scratched out the package, devoured the contents and then politely left their cards on the box; poor Bobberle in helpless rage prompting the while. Since that night the dogs have been chained two and two.

We often had famous guests. Edith Walker sang several times with us, and Knote quite as often. Schumann-Heink, a great friend of the Grand Duke's (she told me she would go through fire for him), sang *Azucena*. She had always been my girlhood's idol, and my ideal of an artist, so I embraced the opportunity to send her a wreath. They said she was much pleased by the attention from a contralto! She used some of my *Schmink* to make up with, and I proudly have the stubs to this day. She made us

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all laugh in rehearsal. When she says in the last act that they will find only a skeleton when they come to drag her from her prison, she passed her hands over her ample contours and emitted a spontaneous chuckle that was irresistibly infectious. Bahr Mildeburg came to us also and revealed to me what *Ortrud* might be. Especially in the first act is she overwhelming. In playing the part later I always felt her influence, and many things I do in that act were inspired by thoughts she gave me. Watch most *Ortruds* in that scene. They simply stand in what they consider mantled inscrutability, trying to portray evil in a heavy, unsubtle manner; and then see Bahr Mildeburg, if you can. All the really great people I have ever met are unpretentious and absolutely charming to work with. Only the near-great seem to consider it necessary to remind you all the time that they are other than you. The greater the man the simpler his manner, I have always found, and I think many will agree with me.

There was an excellent store of men's costumes to call on; beautiful embroidered coats and waistcoats from the eighteenth century, real uniforms of many regiments of bygone days, and the best Wagnerian barbaric stuff I have ever seen, with the exception of van Rooy's.

One of the principal men singers was a tall dark

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fellow, with a most passionate disposition. We played together often and he fell very much in love with me. One day when we were all together at a wood coffee house, his wife asked him how he had broken his watch which she found smashed on the floor one morning. He said he had dropped it while reading the night before, but he told me he had been sitting thinking of me long after his wife had retired, and suddenly saw his watch shattered in a thousand pieces on the floor across the room, where he had hurled it. He was devoted to his little son, a charming sunny little chap, with the dark colouring of his mother.

When I think of these good comrades of mine I cannot but wonder what the war has done to them. The Hun element seemed to be in very few of them, but I can remember it in one. This impossible person, frightfully conceited, lacking absolutely in humour, annoyed and goaded me through two long years with his boorish manners, low ideas of American life, loudly expressed, and crass ignorance of all ideals of living. I came to rehearsal one day and found the colleagues assembled in the green room looking very grave over something. This man H—— said “Ah, here she is!” Then he proceeded to hand round to every one a clipping, which seemed to hurt and annoy them all. He would not show it to me,

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insinuating that I knew all about it. This I stood for an hour and a half; finally I insisted on seeing the clipping which was from the leading paper of a neighbouring city. The critic reviewed a *première* we had just given, slating every one but myself, and saying that I belonged on the world-stage. This had been sufficient grounds for my persecutor to explain the bad criticisms of my other colleagues to them, by telling them that I had an affair with this to me of course, utterly unknown, unheard of critic. When I realized just what he meant, I saw black, seized a property crook stick that lay on the table, and struck him violently on the arm. I then came to, and rushed to the window to cool off. He took the blow without a word, and when I finally turned back from the window ready in a revulsion of feeling to tell him that I was sorry to have hurt him, I found the others all smiling broadly, in relief that I had cleared the matter up. Of course none of them had believed for a second what he had tried to make them believe.

We gave the whole of Goethe's "Faust" in four evenings. We had Lassens' music and I sang two angels and an archangel, a sphinx and a siren during the performances. The mechanical part of the production with its flying witches, flying swings for *Faust* and the devil, traps, dark changes, built-up effects reaching from the foot-lights to almost the top of

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the proscenium arch at the back of the stage, and a thousand and one details were managed without a hitch.

"*Butterfly*" we gave for the first time while I was there, and the Grand Duke took a great interest in the performance. He sent down some beautiful kimonos from his private collection for the *Butterfly* to wear, but paid me the compliment of letting me get my own. I had searched costumers and Japanese shops in vain, in London, Paris and Berlin, for a plain coloured kimono such as servants wear, and finally got one direct from Japan. The *Suzukis* I have always seen have been attired like second editions of *Butterfly* not realizing in the least the value of the contrast to them if they look like a real servant. I have had letters from people who knew the East intimately, who have said very flattering things about my portrayal of the manner of a Japanese, after they have seen my performance, in company with real Japanese. This, considering my height, has always pleased me immensely. If you can feel in a vast audience that even one person knows, understands and appreciates the study you have put upon a rôle to make it true to life, you are rewarded for your pains.

## CHAPTER XIX

### RUSSIANS, COMMON AND PREFERRED

**T**HE Grand Duke was always very good to me. He liked talking English with my sister and me, and always referred to the Germans as "they," never as "we." He asked me to the palace one evening to dinner. We dined in a room hung with portraits of his beautiful sisters. They looked like fair angels, the portraits having been painted when both the Czarina of Russia and her sisters were quite young girls. We were told by friends that the Czarina used to be perfectly exquisite as a young woman, usually gowned in pale grey with a huge bunch of violets. After dinner we went up to the Grand Duke's own private music room where guests were seldom invited. The piano was set high, on a hollow inlaid sounding box, an idea of His Royal Highness's which improved the tone immensely. Behind it on the wall was a life size painting of a Buddha-like female figure. This was in creamy brown and gold, inlaid with chrysophrases, and lit

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mysteriously at will from either side, on top, or bottom. The lighting he preferred, and which he told me he used when he played for hours—he knew not what—was provided by four rings of glass, suspended horizontally from the ceiling, through which a radiant sapphire light poured. I don't know how it was managed, but it was very beautiful. In one corner of the room was a grotto, also blue lit with a charming, quiet, nude figure, and a fountain that dripped as you listened.

I sat down at the piano and played and sang all the negro melodies my father had collected in the Bahamas years before. I think the guests were rather bewildered by the swift pattering English, but the Grand Duke and his cousin, the Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein were charmed with them. Princess Victoria and her mother, Princess Christian, King Edward's sister, were afterwards good enough to be patronesses at my first recital in London.

The Grand Duke loved beautiful Oriental effects, and never seemed to me to be in the least German. He came to a supper-dance once, given by a Baronin O——, dressed as an oriental potentate of sorts. He kept the several hundred guests, and the good dinner waiting over an hour, because he insisted on making up the whole court himself. His wife wore a wonderful headdress she made herself, copied from

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the fresco in his music room. It was all gold beads and emeralds. Round her neck was a huge pear-shaped green stone. I was thinking of the chrysophrases I had seen inset in the wall of the music room, and said: "What wonderful chrysophrases, Your Royal Highness." "Not chrysophrases, emeralds," she gently corrected me.

The Baroness had engaged some people to entertain the Grand Duke at supper, served in the huge new ball-room, but two days before the ball, she telephoned she was in despair as the people had *abgesagt*, and she could get no one else. Would I be so awfully kind as I was coming anyway, to help her out? Every one in town knew all my intimate songs as I had sung them at various functions where the court was invited, so Marjorie and I had to put on our thinking caps to find a new "stunt." Marjorie played the *Laute*, that big, graceful instrument so popular with the love-sick girl in Germany, and I knew some old French songs like "Claire de Lune," that I sang to her accompaniment. I went to the theatre and borrowed the tenor's *Pagliacci* costume, whitened my face and dressed Marjorie as a *Pierrette*. At a given signal I sprang from between purple curtains, put my finger to my lips, turned and beckoned to *Pierrette* and led her to the little stage the Baroness had built. The songs went off very well, and the day

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was saved. Later I changed to a *Dalila* costume, and danced with the Grand Duke, dances he invented as we went along, a favourite amusement of his. He always held his partner to the side, with one arm about her waist, and I must say it was very practical and comfortable. He danced beautifully and his favourite partner was a tall Fräulein von B—— a friend of ours. Once returning from a concert in a little town in the Bergstrasse where I had been singing, and which had been attended by part of the court, this same Hofdame and a famous violinist happened to be with us. We took fourth-class tickets which entitle you to travel with the peasants in large wooden box-cars, with benches running round the walls. We all danced to the violinist's playing, while the peasants looked solemnly on from their benches. I collected *pfennige* in a hat which the violinist then put on his head, *pfennigs* and all. It was a lovely trip.

We heard some of the formal court balls were most amusing. We never went to them as we had not had ourselves presented formally, though this could have been easily arranged. The supper usually consisted largely of ham and spinach, typical of the German Royal simplicity. The dancing was conducted under difficulties. Reversing was not allowed, and all the dancers had to go in the same direction.

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When the Grand Duke wished to dance, his Chamberlain went in front of him to clear the way, as it was always dreadfully crowded. The women were not permitted to pick up their gowns, although trains were *de rigueur* and no short skirts allowed. As nearly all the men are in uniform, including spurs, the ladies have to make frequent trips to the dressing room to repair damages. And yet it is fatal to wear an old gown, as the Grand Duke has a terrific memory and will say: "Oh, that is the charming gown you wore at Kiel two years ago, isn't it?"

All the officers and their wives above the rank of Major must be invited to the court balls, and, in a small principality like this, those of lower rank receive invitations too. One Lieutenant, a member of one of the oldest and poorest Darmstadt families, brought his bride to her first court ball. She was pretty, but beneath him in social position, and he had forgotten to tell her the rule about the trains. She lifted her bridal finery out of the way of the devastating spurs, and was politely requested by a messenger from Royalty to drop it again. Alas! She forgot the warning and again switched her train up from the floor, upon which the oldest *Ehrendame* (Maid of honour), requested her to leave the dancing floor. The poor husband felt it so keenly that

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he asked to be transferred to a regiment in another town, and his request was granted.

They have a custom of choosing an *erster Taenzer* for every big ball. He is usually one of the young officers of the highest birth, and his duties are to assist the hostess in every possible way, and lead all the dances.

Court etiquette is really a most hampering institution. In talking to the Grand Duke for instance, I might not introduce a topic, he had to give all the leads. This naturally has a deadening effect on the conversation. At first the tongue-paralyzing "Yes, Your Royal Highness," "No, Your Royal Highness," even more paralyzing in German, "*Ja wohl, Koenigliche Hoheit,*" "*Nein, Koenigliche Hoheit,*" had to be gone through with, but after a few minutes' conversation I might follow the simple English custom in talking with Royalty, and say "Yes, Sir," or "No, Sir." When the Grand Duchess left a crowded ball-room it was painful both for her and for us. As she advanced, modest and self-conscious, one made a low *Knix*; to one lady she would give her hand, always bristling with rings, and you had to kiss the back of it, risking cutting your lip on the rings; to another merely a glance of the eye, or a nod of the head, and so the slow, tortuous exit was made. In the town on muddy days, you might come on the

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Grand Duke suddenly in a narrow street and you had to back up against the wall to let him pass, at the same time dragging your best skirt in the dirt in the knee-straining curtsy.

I often thought how immensely popular would be the Prince or Grand Duke or King, who would one day say, "Oh, stop it, all of you, and give me your hands and your eyes like human beings." But *what* would the Kaiser say?

Before we went to Darmstadt the Grand Duke had had a tragedy from which they said he had never recovered. His adored little daughter Elisabeth was the idol of every one, and the town children's fairy princess. She was asked to visit her aunt, the Czarina, at Petrograd. While there she died very suddenly, though in perfect health when she left Darmstadt. She is believed to have eaten some poisoned food prepared for the Czar's own children. A monument to her in the *Herren Garten* at Darmstadt, shows a glass coffin of the fairytale type; in it lies sleeping "Snow-White," with the gnomes around her. Above, a weeping willow brushes soft fingers over the sleeping princess.

We had several *Backfisch* admirers; the English "Flapper" comes nearer to translating this strange word than anything I know. These girls followed us closely in the streets for a year and finally met us.

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At first my sister had her band and I had mine. Finally they dwindled to just two, very sweet, charming young girls, of whom we became very fond. Marjorie's was the daughter of a colonel, a count, who was very strict and military with his delicate flower of a girl.

As I have said, strange revealing glimpses of the Hun element came to us now and then, the spirit which now seems to engulf all the better German people. Two of our girl friends were daughters of a famous noble house. Their father was a very old General who lived in great seclusion. His pretty, fair daughters L—— and E——, were often at our house, and were very fond of my mother who lived with us then. The old General finally died, and the girls were worn and bent with grief from his long illness and the trials of nursing him. Their brother was with his regiment, and for some reason could not get to them in time to make arrangements for the funeral. The girls were left badly off, and could not afford a pretentious ceremony. When they tried to explain this to the undertaker, he was incredulous, but finally said with a brutal sneering laugh: "Of course you can have a *pauper's* funeral if you want one." Everything was done in a way to make it all as hard as possible for the poor girls by these brutes, and they used to come and tell us with floods of tears

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of the insults they had to swallow. At last the brother arrived, and of course as soon as he appeared in *uniform* he was bowed down to and served as only a uniform is served in Germany by such brutal types.

During the second year in October word came to us that the Czar of Russia was coming to rest with his family at the Grand Duke's hunting lodge, just outside Darmstadt. We were nervous at the thought of all the Russian students who always throng the Technical School at Darmstadt. It seemed such an easy thing to bomb a man in such a small quiet town. They took great precautions, however, and nothing happened.

I sang many times for the Czar, in "command performances" of *Dalila*, etc. When he left he was good enough to send me a brooch "as a remembrance of his wife." It is the Imperial crown, with sapphire eyes, surrounded by a laurel wreath. He used to sit in a box nearest the stage with the Grand Duke. In the next box were the little Grand Duchesses, Olga, Tatiana and Marie, and sometimes Anastasia, the littlest one of all. They would call in the intervals, "Papa, come in here; *do* Papa dear." They always spoke English together. He would go to them and they would climb all over him, petting him and playing with his hair. It was rather charming to watch.

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Prince Henry of Prussia was there too, as these three, the Grand Duke, Czar, and Prince Henry are, or were, fast friends. When they left the theatre a curious crowd always gathered to see them, but we never had so much as a glimpse of them, for five black, mysterious motors, closely hooded, left in a procession, and no one ever knew which one the Czar was in. The Czarina never came to the theatre; she was intensely nervous just then, and went nowhere.

The Czar was to leave Darmstadt on the Monday, and on Sunday we were to sing "Meistersinger" for him. The day before I had felt frightfully ill, and suffered as I had been doing for several weeks with pains in my side. Sunday morning I sent for a doctor, the pain being so bad I was afraid I would not be able to get through the performance that night. The doctor in turn sent for the surgeon, who packed me off in an hour to the hospital for an appendicitis operation. The next morning I was operated upon, and they told me the Grand Duke had sent to ask how I was, as the Czar wished to know if the operation was successful before he left town. I thought it showed a charming, kindly thoughtfulness of others.

The nurses were all most kind to me in the hospital, but the surgeon was utterly uninterested in anything but the healing of the wound itself, and paid abso-

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lutely no attention to the other rather distressing occurrences of my illness. One could see that a highly strung, nervous American woman would have fared badly with him.

Sazonoff was with the Czar's suite, and I remember the Darmstadtites were much insulted because he always took the train to Frankfurt half an hour away, or to Wiesbaden (one hour), for luncheon or dinner, as he said there was nothing fit to eat at the local hotels. I secretly quite agreed with him.

We often went ourselves to Frankfurt for tea, or a wild American craving would come over me for lobster or chicken salad, and we would up and away to Wiesbaden for supper. Darmstadt was very conveniently situated for short trips, surrounded as it is by interesting towns—Heidelberg only a short distance south of us, or Mannheim close enough for a day's visit. I sang *Niklaus* in "Hoffmann" in Mannheim for the first time without a rehearsal, having learnt the part in my room at the piano without a Kapellmeister to give me the *tempi*, and never having seen the opera. That was a trying experience, not helped by the tenor knocking me flat down in the Venetian scene as I rushed on to tell him that the watch was coming. He weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds, and colliding with him in mid-

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career, I gave him right of way by going down flat on my back.

At Frankfurt we heard a wonderful performance of "Elektra" with Richard Strauss conducting and Bahr-Mildenburg as *Klytemnestra*. I shall never forget her in it, nor the orchestral effects Strauss produced. I felt at the end as if I had been watching an insane woman, so marvellous was Bahr-Mildenburg's portrayal of the half-demented creature. Her large face, pale, with haunting, sick eyes, her scarlet, gold-embroidered draperies, the clutching, bony fingers on her jewelled staff, the swaying body she seemed barely able to keep erect, the psychology of the queen's character, all this together combined to give the exact effect she wanted, and to convey it strongly and clearly to the farthest seat in the big theatre.

We grew to know very well a Russian boy, whose family had interests in Darmstadt. He told us much of Russia and he and his sister seemed creatures of a different world to us. She was frail and exotic looking, with very curly, bronze hair, a skin like a gardenia petal, and the tiniest full-lipped, blood-red mouth I have ever seen. At home she spent most of her time in the saddle or in the stables. She had men's uniforms made, and rode out with the officers dressed as they were. They could both drink enor-

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mous quantities of *Bowle* and follow it up with champagne and Swedish punch, and never even flush pink. Only S—— used to become very talkative and spout Greek verses by the hour. At that time we lived in a pension, and every Saturday night or after a big performance of mine, say “Carmen,” he would arrange an elaborate fête. Sometimes we all had to appear dressed as Romans in sheets and wreaths, before he was satisfied. One night I remember I grew tired of our all being so monotonously beautiful, and came down dressed as a Suffragette, with the false nose I wear as the *Witch* in “Haensel und Gretel,” flowing grey locks, spectacles, and some ridiculous costume, half Greek and half witch. S—— was so horrified that he never once looked at me during the evening and I finally saw that he was so genuinely unhappy that I changed to something more esthetic.

He had as much spending money apparently as he desired, but his sister never had a cent. She had no evening gown and only shabby clothes. She seemed blissfully unaware of any shortcomings of her wardrobe, however, and only once felt the lack of a party dress. We arranged something for her that time, as she had no money to spend, and her brother did not seem to think it necessary to give her any. After a particularly successful fête, S—— would wander the deserted streets and kneel before

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fountains in the public squares, dipping water from them with his derby hat, and pouring it on the earth as libations to Pallas Athene, as he always called me. And he was not in the least drunk, if you will believe me, only fearfully Russian.

When they left the pension their luggage at the station consisted of a pile of shabby hand-baggage, mostly newspaper parcels. The girl had no purse but a soldier's little coin case of goatskin, so Frau von A—— emptied her own bag, and stuffed L——'s possessions into it. Their indifference to all these things which would all have been regulated and in keeping with their position if they had belonged to any other country than Russia, I believe was quite typical and seemed to me rather sublime.

S—— afterwards made a trip round the world. Goodness knows how he found out whether I was singing or not, but some night after singing one of my big rôles I would receive a monstrous basket of red roses, or an armful of orchids, cabled for from Honolulu or China. He even remembered my *Dachshund's* birthday, and cabled the baker to send Peter a wonderful *Torte* with birthday candles.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GRANDMOTHERS' BALLET

**A**LL this time I was working very hard at the opera. Our repertoire was very large, including nearly all the Italian operas, from Verdi to Wolf-Ferrari, and the German operas from the time of Weber and Mozart up to Humperdinck. Everything was given in German, some of the translations good and some poor. At first it had seemed terribly difficult to accustom myself to the German sounds in *Dalila* or *Carmen*, after the sonorous French, but latterly German came to seem quite as natural, though never so beautiful nor singable. Every one in the audience, however, understood the text, and surely this is the important thing. How can they enter into the spirit of an opera when they are guessing whether that is a love phrase or an insult that the tenor is singing? The prejudice against translating into the vernacular has had to be overcome in nearly all European countries and will, I suppose, be only a question of time with us. In Russia, operatic composers flowered and reached their world

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prominence only after the Russian language was used for the libretto. In Germany Italian was discarded for the language of the singers only after a long struggle, but the great abundance of German operas came after it was adopted, not before. In France also Italian libretti were used for generations, but can any one imagine a Debussy composing a "Pelléas et Mélisande" to an Italian libretto? Each school must find itself in its own tongue, and I question whether these matters can be hurried.

I have always thought a good English translation would contribute more to the general pleasure of the audience than a misunderstood gabble of words, even though English is perhaps lacking in the subtle charm worked upon us by foreign speech.

My colleagues by this time accepted me almost as a German, and I did the routine work as though I were a German. Surely this experience is more profitable than an occasional appearance on a more famous stage, such as many of my own countrywomen aimed at. I often heard of their struggles against intrigue, and long pauses between rôles, while they waited hoping for a chance. We all worked steadily through the season and rehearsed every day. The scheme of rehearsals was worked out and given to us every two weeks on a printed *Spielplan*. This showed us exactly which operas and plays were

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scheduled for the next fortnight, and all the rehearsals we should have to attend, beginning with the room rehearsals for the soloists alone, then the stage rehearsals without chorus, the stage rehearsal with chorus and piano, and finally the *General Probe*, or last orchestra rehearsal on the stage, with everything as at a performance. At the side of the *Spielplan* was a tentative list of works in preparation with their probable dates of appearance. All this made the work very systematic, and I knew exactly what time I should have for study and what for myself. If a rare week passed without my singing at least once I grew restless and unhappy. My constant aim was to learn and develop, and every rôle taught me something. Versatility is a most useful attribute on the operatic stage, and if you play all the way from *Fides* to soubrette parts in operetta, and the audience sticks to you, you may be considered fairly versatile.

I remember one strenuous week in particular. I had to sing *Dalila* in Prague on Wednesday evening. "Zauberfloete" was scheduled for Tuesday in Darmstadt, and by taking a late train I could arrive in Prague in time to dress for *Dalila*. I had to sing the last bit of the *Third Lady* in "Zauberfloete" in travelling dress with a black cloak thrown over me and then rush straight to the train. We travelled all night, changing at Dresden in the middle of the

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night, and waiting at the noisy station for some time. Arrived at Prague I went straight to the theatre, the old one with gas lamps for footlights. "Don Giovanni" of Mozart was given for the first time in this very theatre they told me, and was, I believe, directed by Mozart himself. I duly sang my *Dalila* and sped back to Darmstadt, where I had to sing *Frau Reich* Thursday night; and this tiring lady has to have a certain lightness of touch no matter how much train smoke you have swallowed. My troubles were not over yet as I had to take the train that night for Edinboro, Scotland, where I was to appear with the orchestra, and on the following night in Glasgow. The journey was long and tedious, and the only bright spot I can remember was while we crossed a bit of Belgium. We had had a lunch basket handed in with the typical bottle of *vin rouge*, and neither Marjorie nor I wanted it. The next time our train slowed down we happened to have an engine beside us, and I handed the wine through the window to the driver, who received it with true Belgian imperturbability.

I was very tired and very sick crossing the channel. We arrived in London in a terrible storm, feeling absolutely exhausted. Marjorie said, "The only thing that hasn't happened is, that we have not yet lost our baggage." We waited on the cold platform—it was November,—till all the luggage had been

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taken out of the vans—no familiar trunks for us. I went worn out to the hotel, leaving poor Marjorie to struggle. She made the round of the stations where possible trains from the coast might be met—all of no avail. The next day was Sunday and we could not possibly have found a gown for me to use at the concert. We slept that night in towels and underclothes, and if you've ever done it you know what sort of an all-night funeral *that* is. The next morning early the missing trunks were found and we continued our journey. We were much amused when we found that no trains left for Scotland during the day on Sunday, and that they had to wait for the friendly cover of the night before they dared nefariously to slip out and break the Sabbath calm. Monday night I almost broke down on the platform during the concert, in one of the hugest halls in the world. Marjorie comforted me and sent for some whiskey which I gulped down between songs. Gradually the chilled blood in me thawed, and my voice with it, my nerve came back and I scored a success, as I did the following night in Glasgow. We then went back to Darmstadt the quickest possible way, having been in six countries in as many days.

We walked a great deal in the beautiful country round Darmstadt, and I sometimes rode over the miles of charming bridle paths. We made expeditions into

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the beautiful Taunus country, all gold and scarlet in autumn. The delightful custom of having *Wald Haeuse* at convenient distances in every direction round the city, makes these expeditions a great pleasure. The coffee is usually good, and the cakes always so.

Darmstadt is on the Bergstrasse, almost a highway through that part of Germany, and we were pestered one year with a constant stream of beggars. They were usually ex-theatre people they said, and I found they only came to me and not to my colleagues, so word must have been passed round that an "easy" and extremely rich American lived in the town, who was good for at least a mark.

The strangest stories circulated about us, and why we should choose Germany to live in. One was that I was the illegitimate daughter of King Edward, therefore a cousin of the Grand Duke, which explained a likeness to him which I could see myself. They said my sister and mother were really no relation to me, but simply paid to take care of me.

As I have said we had several picturesque privileges because I was a *Grossherzogliche Beamtin*—an employée of the Royal house. I used to go on certain days to the old Schloss near the theatre, no longer the residence of the reigning family as it was too old to be comfortable. I passed under shadowy arches

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and through cobblestone courts, surrounded by aged windows, till I came to where the *Schloss Kellermann* lived. I went down a steep old stone stair into the bowels of the earth, where I was greeted by the Head Cellarman, who wore a white apron and took orders at a candle-lit table. I told him just how much Rotwein I wanted, or perhaps a bottle of champagne for a treat, and paid a ridiculously small sum for it all. The Grand Duke got it duty free and at special rates, and we, as his employés were entitled to this rate too. For a small fee two large flunkies in *Grossherzogliche* uniforms would deliver it to my apartment later in the day. I believe the cellars were very wonderful, but I never was asked to investigate.

I think only the principals had this privilege, neither the chorus nor the ballet sharing it, but I may be mistaken.

Our ballet was rather pitiful. Kind-hearted directors hesitated to dismiss faithful servants of years' standing, and the result was a phalanx of grandmothers at the back of the stage. I used to give my old clothes to the chorus and ballet women, and one family in particular I almost adopted. The poor mother was a handsome creature of about forty-five. Her eldest son was twenty-four and a carpenter, and two babies were born while I was in Darmstadt. Children of all ages came in between. The father drank

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and used to ill-treat the mother, who had to dance gaily as a peasant boy or gypsy, and then go home to all that misery. Little by little I told the officers' wives I knew about these things and they were very kind about sending their worn clothing to me to distribute amongst the women. I believe it amused them very much to see their old evening gowns washed, always washed, and refurbished, doing duty as "Empire" gowns, or as the latest thing in Paris creations on the backs of the walk-on ladies in the French comedies. Eighty marks a month is not much, even if it is paid all the year round, and somebody has got to help.

We had a school of forestry in the town, largely attended by American boys. It was in the period when our Western boys padded their shoulders tremendously and wore hump-toed boots. These boys were all husky specimens, who dressed in the most forestry of forest clothes, boots laced to the knee, wide western hats and flannel shirts. The woods round Darmstadt are all most tame and well looked after, but the boys seemed to think they were dressing the part correctly. When left to themselves these boys were quite well behaved, but the German students tried to bully them. The beer-drinking type of student, with his ridiculous little coloured cap stuck on one side of his head, thinks he owns his own par-

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tical café where his *Stamm-Tisch* may happen to be. They objected to various mannerisms of the American boys who visited these cafés, and the American boys replied in their own western way by knocking the Germans down. This method of fist fighting was quite unknown to the Germans, who replied by sending a challenge to duel according to their custom. The American boys in turn knew nothing of duelling and refused to fight except with fists. I think a good many fat Germans bit the dust and got up swearing vengeance. Finally, we heard, the American boys wired to their fellow countrymen who were students in Frankfort, "Come over tonight and clean up." Exactly what happened we never heard, but as both sides grew to understand and respect each other more, the trouble gradually subsided. The Russian element, usually rather undesirable in Darmstadt, contributed largely to the disturbances.

There were several duelling corps in town, and an American friend of ours, a student at the technical college, told us of witnessing their extremely bloody combats. Part of the glory is to have yourself sewed up without an anesthetic, and go on fighting, and we heard sickening details. It is supposed to make your nerve tremendously steady, and the ones who go through the stated number of duels, fighting their way slowly through a regular course of progression, al-

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ways the winner, must indeed be shock and disgust proof. The authorities frowned on the practice but it existed in force nevertheless. One boy killed another while we were there; he was imprisoned, but on his return was treated as a conquering hero by the members of his corps. That surely belongs to Hun training.

## CHAPTER XXI

### STAGE FASHIONS AND THE GLORY OF COLOUR

**W**E played continuously nine months from September to June, and then scattered for the holidays. I often went to Munich for the Wagnerian *Festspiel*. We have many German relatives (though not a drop of German blood), as three of my grandfather's sisters married German officers. Through remote ancestors we also have dozens of cousins in the north of Germany. The Munich relations I dearly loved. The son of the famous court architect, von Klenze, who built nearly all the noble buildings in Munich for the old King Ludwig of Bavaria, who abdicated his throne—married my mother's aunt, and their descendants were always very charming to me. The northern cousins who lived in East and North Prussia we always heard were quite different, cold, critical, and not warm, and artistic, and friendly, as I found our southern relations. In Darmstadt they seem between the two peoples in character, and of course in the theatre one meets all sorts.

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Our *Souffleuse*, "Bobberle," was from Schwabia, and her sister was a character. She proved her elegance by wearing the most brilliant colours on her fat little body, and plastering the family jewelry all over herself. She screamed remarks about the members of the company to her friends between the acts, and the remarks were not as undiscerning as you might think.

The top box on the right side of the house, was reserved for the humble hangers-on of the *Personal*. My sister used often to sit up there as she could just walk in without my having to ask for a seat, while my mother sat in state in a specially reserved seat in the orchestra, for which I had to ask each time. The oldest mothers and the *Souffleuse's* sister used to be an unending joy to my sister, in their comments. The order of their seats was theirs by divine right, they thought, and woe betide some comparatively new-comer who would venture to take one-eyed Frau S——'s or fat Frau W——'s chair. It was called the *Raben's Nest* (the raven's nest), and we felt its influence hanging over us on the stage. I was quite familiar with the remarks that were made nightly:

"*Ach! unsere Kaethe spielt ja Heute!*" ("Oh! our little Katy plays tonight"), the mother of Katy would announce rapturously, and settle down with her chin on the rail, and her back bent like a jack-

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knife, for three hours of proud but critical joy. She had probably toiled most of the night with her little seamstress to turn out the marvels Kaethe wore.

There are certain props that lend an unfailing air of gorgeousness to the provincial German mind, whether viewed from in front of, or behind the foot-lights. An aigrette does duty for years and has a sure-fire elegance; pinned on a winter hat of black velvet, or a summer leghorn, or worn with a bow in an evening coiffure, you know its wearer belongs to the most exclusive social set. Our coiffeur had only one eye, but used to bring that one as close as possible to the head of her victim and make it do duty for two. She turned out wonderful puffs and curls. In "Dollar Prinzessin" I introduced a new style of hair dressing from Paris: the hair parted, and a multitude of close curls at the back of the head, the whole surrounded by a rather broad band of ribbon of the shade one desired. This took Darmstadt by storm, and was repeated for two years in every conceivable version. The curls I am sorry to say, turned into tight sausages, but how much more *praktisch*! Couldn't the curls then be worn at least three times without being re-dressed?

A lorgnon is of course "Hoch elegant," also quite irresistibly snorty, if you are playing an elderly Duchess type of person. If you read that tunic

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are worn in Paris you put them on all your gowns, though they may be hideously unbecoming to you. Even the time-honoured hat-on-the-back-of-the-head outline had to be renounced one season, and every one peered out at you from a hat or toque brim almost down on the bridge of the nose in front, and cocked up in the back. Unbecoming—it was admitted—, but “man” did it in Paris and should Darmstadt lag behind?

The problem of clothes for the actress is a terrific one, and I think almost every one in town knows and makes allowances for this. The men go further astray in the quest of fashion, or perhaps it is that the slightest lapse from rigid formality is so noticeable in their dress of today. In Metz dickeys, or small false fronts, were worn as a matter of course in the place of evening shirts. If you were long and the dickey was short you stuck a jaunty, flaming silk handkerchief in your vest in front, to hide dangerous glimpses of Jaegers. And then why stick slavishly to the bow tie of white cotton? A black or scarlet string tie was distinctly more novel, and attracted attention at once if worn with an otherwise conventional evening coat.

In Darmstadt the men knew better, but some of them tried to ape the officers in walk, monocle, or hair brushing, to the huge delight of the officers. One

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clever actor always made his greatest climax by suddenly throwing back his coat edge as he finished a "There, what do you say to that?" speech, and so revealing the gorgeous black satin lining. This of course was unanswerable, and never failed of its effect. You knew at once you had a man of the world before you, a man familiar with the most exclusive club life, valeted, perfumed and manicured irreproachably, and you succumbed accordingly.

The Grand Duke would sit, lynx-eyed, up in his box, and take this all in. I always felt he never missed anything, and it was inspiring to play to him. When his box was empty I always missed this scrutiny.

Sometimes one gets messages that well-known people have been out in front, and this knowledge, and the thought that some wandering *Intendant* in search of talent may be watching you, always spurs you on if you are tired. Once a famous Dutch painter saw me as *Amneris*. He was of course quite unknown to me, but sent me word later to say what pleasure I had given him by recreating in his mind the Egyptian silhouettes and colouring he loved. I had striven so hard to do this, it was a great pleasure to know that I had succeeded in suggesting it.

A dear old gentleman in town, who had travelled much, sent me many postcards from Spain, because my *Carmen* brought back to him his happy days

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there. He sent me a real Russian "Order" for my *Orlofsky* in "*Fledermaus*," which I always afterwards wore with that gentleman's severe court dress. Laurel wreaths and wreaths of heavy silvered leaves were sent to me, with gold lettered inscriptions, and I kept them for ages in my music room.

During the last winter in Darmstadt I went up to Berlin to give a try-out recital. It was managed by the great Wolf Bureau, and my friend Mr. Fernow at once took an interest in me, which continued as long as I was in Germany. I heard of Coenraad von Bos, and wanted to have him play for me. We rehearsed the day before the concert, and I soon found I had made another real friend in Bos. He said afterwards, when he was told I wanted just one rehearsal for a Berlin recital, he thought to himself I must be either very bad or very good. The truth was I could not get a longer leave of absence from the opera and so more than one rehearsal was impossible. I have always adored rehearsing, especially for a concert, with such an artist as Bos to play for me, and one of the greatest joys of my life was preparing a program with Erich Wolf for a later Berlin recital. To go back to my concert—Bos worked very hard that evening to make it a success, calling up all of his musical friends to tell them of his new find. It *was* a great success and I have never read such notices as

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I received from all the papers. They told me no foreigner had ever had such unanimous and extraordinary praise for a first recital, and Papa Fernow kissed me in the green room.

I should have immediately followed up that concert with two or three more, but I was obliged to return to my duties, and so lost the opportunity of reaping the reward of an unusual beginning.

They wanted me to sign on in Darmstadt, but I felt that I had sung the repertoire faithfully for three years, and that I wanted more worlds to conquer, and a bigger town to criticize my work.

I went to Munich to sing for Baron S——, who liked me and offered me a contract, depending on the outcome of two *Gastspiele*, or guest performances, to be absolved the following October, my contract then to go into effect.

My farewell in Darmstadt was "Carmen" and the people *were* good to me. After the last curtain I left the stage for a minute, and when I came back to take my calls the stage was filled from side to side with flowers; they were banked and grouped all round me. The curtain then went up and down innumerable times, till I felt like weeping at leaving all these kind friends. For some reason my cab did not come for me and when I left the theatre the crowd waiting at the stage door followed me home, calling

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out "Come back soon," "Auf Wiedersehen," and many kind things. These are not perhaps great triumphs, but they make an artist's life very happy, and the life I led for those three years, comes very near being the ideal one for an opera singer.

I think it was two years before this, on returning to Paris, that I took part in Strauss' "Salome." We gave six performances at the Chatelet. I took the page's small part, just for the fun of it, and so as to study the opera. The stage manager was a German of course, and spoke very little French. The singers were all Germans, and the "figurants," supers, all French. Things did not go well at rehearsals. Burrian, as the King would cry for wine or grapes, and no one moved to get what he wished, as no one understood what he was saying, and so could not get the musical cue. I was the only person able to speak the two languages fluently, and finally the stage manager asked me to take charge of all the business on my side of the stage. "*Suivez Madame!*" he would yell. So I said "Remove throne." "Bring golden vessels." "Clear stage," etc., to the intelligent crowd of supers, many of whom were young actors, who wanted as I did to study the opera. I remember one hideous little girl, who had an unattractive sore lip. Some one told her that it did not matter much, trying to comfort her, as she seemed so depressed about it,

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but she was inconsolable, and replied darkly, "it was always seven days lost." This brave effort to create the impression of an otherwise lurid existence deceived no one however, though they were too polite to show their doubt.

Destinn's voice rose thrillingly in the love phrases that *Salome* pours at *John*; and though she wore a costume that my young French friends considered consisted chiefly of *chats enragés*,—mad cats,—as it had two huge animal heads of gold, where such types of stage villainesses are always heavily protected, the tense quality of her voice, and the simple strength of her acting suited the character as Strauss had painted it with his music, and she achieved results that no other singer I know of could have done.

I had gone back as usual to de Reszke to have my voice put in order, and was having, at the same time, my taste put in order by my sculptor brother Cecil, in our walks and talks about Paris and its museums. My brother's wonderfully clear vision of art and beauty is never clouded, and I owe much to my association with him. We used to go to all the Salons, and I remember vividly the first time we stumbled on a specimen of the modern Spanish school, then quite new to us. We had looked at dreary wastes of raspberry jam Venuses, resting on the crests of most solid waves, dozens of canvases still in the Louis XVI

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era, and much pastel-coloured mediocrity, when suddenly I called out "Look, Cec, something new!" It was a big square of flaming colour—women and a child in red checked cotton, picking scarlet tomatoes from high-trained vines, in the brilliant sun. It glowed and fairly zizzed with colour, and had that radiating, vibrating quality that things have in the hot sunshine. We had had the "confetti" and "spot" types of work for some years, but this canvas dwarfed anything modern I had seen in Paris. We have never found another one by the same man, and have often wondered what became of his work.

I think that was when I first fell in love with colour *per se*, though I had flirted with it before. We had loved Monet and the opalescent, shimmering lights in his water-garden series, but never had I been so stirred and thrilled by mere paint on canvas as I was by this Spaniard's work. It seems that a man only rarely can put colours together that will have the living dazzling look that one sees in nature. Matisse was a past master of it, and even though one might not agree with him otherwise, his colour was a joy.

Later the Cubists and Futurists invaded Paris. When I am with Cecil and he talks to me of their work, I see their aims quite clearly, and understand what they are trying to express, for their "line of talk" is

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much more lucid than their work: but when I am not with my brother I must confess my understanding is dimmed, and I forget the arguments he used.

We lived very simply in Paris, having our meals sometimes at the *quartier* restaurants, and sometimes getting *filets* of fresh mushrooms, peas, and delicious Paris potatoes, with big strawberries shaped like little whisk-brooms, and *crème d'Isigny* in its stubby little earthen pots, and preparing them at home. I had a small apartment in the same house as my mother, and my brother had his studio some blocks from us.

We met Spaniards, Norwegians, French, anything but Americans, of whom we know but few—we learnt so much more through talking with people of other nationalities than our own. Paris is such a marvellous place for development. As my brother said, he never knew when some one whose opinion he must respect might not drop into the studio, and give his work a searching inspection. The atmosphere of having to keep constantly at your very best because of the rigid intellectual criticism you encounter at every turn, is most stimulating.

Rembrandt Bugatti was a great friend of my brother's, of whom I think he was really fond, and this was a priceless association for a young student. Bugatti was a genius, unrivalled by any other man of his age, and very few of any other age, and his tragic

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death is a great loss to the art world. His growing deafness and his acute sensitiveness must have made life impossible for him. His recollection of the happy years spent in Antwerp, when he and my brother were well-known figures there—wearing long, swinging, dark blue, Italian cavalry capes, smoking eternal pipes and working all day in the open air in the Zoo—compared to what the Germans have made of Belgium, proved too great a spiritual burden for him.

## CHAPTER XXII

### ROYAL HUMOUR

**D**URING that summer Baron S—— died in Munich. This of course was a great blow to me and I did not know what I could do about my contract. I went to Berlin to see Herr Harder, who told me I must *gastieren* according to contract in October, but as the new *Intendant* was not to come into office till November, no one could really engage me, especially as a very exacting new musical director was coming from Vienna later in the season, and they would both undoubtedly want to choose their own first *contralto*.

However, I went and sang under trying circumstances, with a very sore throat and a sinking heart. The colleagues thought I would be engaged, but I did not see who was to do it, and as it turned out I was right—and there *was* no one to do it. This depressed me extremely, but I resolved to return to Berlin, and devote the year to following up my previous recital. As a matter of fact, this apparent blow turned out to be all for the best, as so often

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happens, for otherwise I should have been caught in Germany at the beginning of the war, and my career upset, which happened to several other girls.

The concert field is a rich one in Europe and I had made a good beginning. I booked a tour in Holland, through the kindly offices of Bos, where I was as well received as I had been in Berlin. The critics wrote such eulogies that I almost blush to read them. People quite unknown to me would go from town to town to hear me, and I would see them at Rotterdam or Utrecht smiling up at me. I have never sung to such adorable audiences. They seem to understand all languages, and a "Claire de Lune" sung in French seems to please them as much as Schubert's magnificent "Allmacht."

The "coffee pause" half way down the program, was quite a shock to me the first night, but I soon grew to look for it, and enjoyed the smell of the strong smoking coffee the waiters used to carry round on trays to the audience. It was rather disturbing, however, to have to watch the waiters finish up the contents of the pots, at the back of the hall, while I began on the second half of the program. Evidently to them the coffee, and the audience, were of first importance, and the mere singer quite secondary; all of which is point of view.

My sister and I lived at The Hague, and Holland

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is so delightfully small that we could nearly always return there, after the evening's concert in another town. I went back in the spring for another series of recitals and felt that I was returning to old friends. I was offered a tour to Java, and would love to have undertaken it, but could not see my way clear just then.

In December I was in Berlin for a week or two, and Harder sent me word to come and sing for Mr. Percy Pitt of Covent Garden. The two contracts I had held so far had been closed with a minimum of delay and trouble, and now I was to make the biggest one of my career in the same simple way. I was not in the best of voice when I sang for Mr. Pitt, but I sang the Siegfried *Erda*, and was disgusted with myself for singing so badly. He asked me if I were ready to sing the list of leading rôles which he read to me, and on my answering in the affirmative engaged me on the spot; proving, to me at least, that successful or unsuccessful *Vorsingen* and even *Gastspiele* have very little to do with most engagements. In the case of a singer of any reputation at all, the Director has usually made up his mind pretty well beforehand what he is going to do. If he wants you he takes you, even if you have sung badly that particular time, and if he does not want you, nothing that I have heard of can make him engage you.

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This contract was for the following spring. We were to give the "Ring" of Wagner, three times, and Arthur Nikisch was to conduct. Also "Koenigskinder" was to be given for the first time at Covent Garden, and I was one of the few who had sung the *Witch* at that time. "The Flying Dutchman" completed the list of operas I was to sing in.

After closing the contract we left for Bergen, Norway, where I had a concert engagement. One great advantage of having my dear friends, the Jones, back of me, was, that I could take a big journey like this; and though it might eat up all of my profit I did not have to refuse it on that account.

We were fascinated by Scandinavia, and though I went to sing with the orchestra in one concert only, I remained in Bergen to give three recitals by myself. The trip across the Finse railway, over the snowy glaciers, I shall never forget. The line had only recently been opened, and very few passengers shared the trip with us. We saw a herd of reindeer, and I fed some of them with coarse salt at one of the stations. Bergen itself was warm and muggy and smelt of fish. Everything in the place smelt of fish, even the hotel towels. Two kindly women managers took charge of my concerts, and I felt far away from America till I saw a portrait of Miss Emma Thursby in their music shop.

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The warm-hearted Norwegians were delightful to us, and we met many of Grieg's relations, and heard tales of him. One of his cousins, I think, came all the way to Berlin to study with me, but to my great regret I had no time to give her.

I was interviewed on my first day by a nice little fellow, who could hardly speak German, and no English nor French. Our conversation was conducted under difficulties, but was most enjoyable none the less. The next day I received a request for a photo from him, with a card saying: "*Seit ich Ihnen sah bin ich sterblich verliebt.*"—This bad German means approximately, "Since I saw you I am mortally in love."

We loved our stay in Scandinavia. I remember when we first arrived in Christiania we could not make out why the streets were thronged with good looking men and women, from two o'clock till three in the afternoon, and quite empty after that. We walked through the snowy, glittering avenues, and met all these healthy red-cheeked pedestrians talking and laughing and having a wonderful social time. We then discovered their meal times are quite different from ours. You have an early cup of coffee, then a light breakfast at eleven o'clock, then dinner at three or four, preceded sometimes by this walk. Supper is served at eight-thirty or nine, and is usually laid out

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on a long table in the centre of the room. There are cold meats and salads; cold fish and pickled fish; queer breads; and, of course, you go first for the wonderful *hors d'œuvres* of countless varieties, for this is where they grow.

A Swede once told me you could always tell a German travelling in Sweden, because when the *Schwedische Platte* or *hors d'œuvres* were passed to him, he made a meal of the dainty mayonnaise and savoury morsels, instead of eating them as an appetizer, as is intended. In the beautiful station of Copenhagen, decorated in the old Norse style, with scarlet-painted wooden carved beams, we were served with all we could eat of these dainties with bread and butter, for about forty cents—and I wished I were a German!

On the way home, we were storm-bound at Copenhagen, and I at once fell in love with that city, and its wonderful blond race of big men and women. We heard stories of divorces and passionate love affairs, that made other nations pale by contrast. One delightful man told us he had had no objection to his wife having *one* lover, but when he found she had seven, he thought it time to get a divorce! He still quite often saw her, and said they were the best friends in the world. He liked to take her out to dinner and the theatre and tell her all about everything. He called us "The Misses Chickens Howard," and was

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only restrained by business engagements from following us from place to place. That was a hobby of his, he said, when he found a sympathetic artist.

We crossed back to Germany, and I sang with Nickisch for the first time, in Hamburg. His room behind the stage swarmed with ladies, in the *entr'acte*, and the concert master told me it was always so. A valet looked him over carefully before he went on the stage, pulled down his coat, and patted the Herr Professor's shoulders. I remembered the cuff story in Metz and watched through the crack of the door to see if it still held good—and it did!

Later I sang with Mengelberg in Frankfort. He said to me, eating apples the while: "I engaged you because friends of mine in Holland told me you could sing. Can you?" After the concert he came to me again, still eating apples, and said: "*Es is wahr. Sie haben eine Prachtvolle Stimme, und koennen prachtvoll singen,*" and kissed my hand.

To hear Mengelberg direct "Tod und Verklaerung" of Strauss, with his own orchestra is one of the most tremendous things I have ever experienced. One is transported. A little man with a tight mouth and an aureole of fair hair, he is feared by his men, but *how* he is respected! That winter he spent almost every night in the train, as he conducted regularly in Holland, Germany and Russia.

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I have always been able to get on with really great musicians, and have found only the second best *difficile* and small. The path seems suddenly smooth when in rehearsal, you feel this wealth of absolute knowledge and authority supporting, leading and inspiring you. Anxiety vanishes and one's best pours from one without effort, only with the sensation of wringing every last drop of beauty from the phrase.

We returned to Sweden to concerts with Stenhammer, and I should have crossed to Helsingfors to sing *Dalila*, but had to return on account of engagements in Germany.

Through our forbears, as I have said, we have many relations in Germany; and in Berlin we enjoyed immensely knowing our cousins the von M——s. The General had just been moved back to Berlin to fill an extremely high military position, and as he was musical we, of course, had much in common. The daughters were all beautifully brought up; simple girls, frank and natural as German aristocrats are. They gave a musical, at which the General and I both sang. Their apartment was very large, but was so crowded for the concert that I felt as though the Duchess of Dalibor sat almost in my throat as I sang, and her enormous pearls distracted me in the "Sapphische Ode." I have never seen such unbelievably huge pearls. We were asked to stay to *Abend-*

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*essen* after the concert, and it consisted chiefly of the sandwiches and refreshments left over from the party. This showed us again the absolute simplicity of the well-born German of irreproachable position.

The girls were very intimate with the Kaiser's only daughter, Princess Victoria Louise, and when her marriage to the Duke of Brunswick's son, was celebrated, Irma was one of the bride's-maids. Onkle Geo, as we called him, told us about the Kaiser, to whom he was devoted. At the dinner table, he said, His Majesty would usually talk only with the men present, ignoring completely the ladies who might be present.

When the General made his re-entry into court for the first time after receiving his high office, all the courtiers present watched to see just how he would be received by His Majesty, which would then give the keynote for his treatment by the whole court. After the general reception, General von M—— was invited to go into a more private room with several more gentlemen. This promised well, as it was in this room that the Kaiser talked more intimately with the guests of his choosing.

The General held his helmet with its *Feder-busch*, or crest of white feathers on his arm, and felt the eyes of all assembled on him as the Kaiser came quickly

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into the room, and made his way to him. Now was the critical moment that might have everlasting consequences. Onkle Geo confessed to nervousness, but His Majesty guessed the situation, and said, "Hum! *You* need a new helmet, that *Feder-busch* is shabby," in a bantering tone. The courtiers knew this was meant for friendly, humorous comment, and was intended to be laughed at, so they laughed accordingly at Onkle Geo's confusion, and the ice was broken. "And my helmet was quite new!" said Onkle Geo, half indignantly, half laughing.

The court was very simple, and we heard stories of this through other friends who had the *entrée*. A Graefin D——, returning one evening from a court ball given in honor of the then Regent of Bavaria, gave me a bon-bon done up in silver paper, with a little photo of the Kaiserin on it. The bon-bon was white, and the Graefin said as long as any one could remember, these had been the official souvenirs of court dinners: only the photo varied.

One charming girl we knew, a great favourite of the Empress, came back from the Palace one Christmas day, and told us what she had received from Her Majesty as a Christmas greeting—a small, old-fashioned tippet and muff of woolly white Angora, and two small, cheap Japanese vases, that some one had

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given the Empress the year before. The Royal magnificence one would expect gave way to—extreme simplicity let us call it.

The Kaiser took a keen interest in the opera, and gave wonderful presents to his favourite singers. We saw a spectacle at the opera house that he was supposed to have inspired, and which was carried out under his direction. It was a sort of panorama of scenes in Corfu, where he spent much time. It must have been horribly expensive, for I never saw so much scenery at any performance, and it really was exquisite to see those beautifully reproduced scenes unfold before one.

Such things, however, as painted castles and woods and flowers always seem to me excessively naïve. The Russian idea of a wonderful imaginative back-drop is infinitely more stimulating to a performance. Of course, there are places where it cannot be used. If the scene is laid in a Childs' restaurant a back-drop might perhaps be comic to a mind not yet used to making its own pictures; but I hope and believe the aim is towards simplicity in this direction; but the simplicity must be carried out by artists, and first-rate ones. Who, who has seen the leaping figures of the Russian Ballet in "Prince Igor," has felt a lack on the scenic side because the tents with their feather of smoke were suggested on a flat back-drop? Who

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longed for real, that is, one-side real, tents—with steam escaping from a semi-hidden pipe through the top? The luridness was suggested by colour far more skilfully than if rocks, thinly swaying and lit by red lights, had cluttered up the wings. Make the audience do the thinking, blend stimulation with simulation, and if your artist has been a true one no one will cry for flapping pillars, or crumpled leaves on a net.

“Boris Goudonow,” as it used to be given at the Metropolitan, is a good example of what real artist vision can do with colour. Those who saw those figures in brilliant green, kneeling with their backs to the audience, barring off the procession scene, while the towering minaret of the cathedral carried the eye up and up at the back, will surely never forget the light and shade grouping. It has since, I am sorry to say, lost some of its skilful arrangement, which I suppose is unavoidable, but the performance is still homogeneous and a unit, as to *décors*, score and costumes.

It was on the Kaiser's birthday that we saw “Corfu,” and afterwards we went to the newly-opened Hotel Esplanade for supper. I have never seen such a sight. All imaginable uniforms were there, on all types of officers and foreign diplomats. Some looked magnificently romantic, and some as if they had

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stepped from the comic opera stage. The women, as usual in Germany, though plentifully be-jewelled, looked dull and inadequate beside the men.

One summer night in Berlin, we went to Max Reinhardt's small theatre, the Kammerspiel, to see "Fruehlingserwachen." My dear friend, Oscar Saenger, was in town, and I had happened to see him in a box at the opera the evening before. He had come to see Berger, the giant baritone whom he had transformed into a tenor, in his first performance of *Sieg-mund*. I think Putnam Griswold, that splendid type of the best American singer, sang the *Wanderer* that night. Saenger asked us to go to the theatre with him, as we had not met in years, and by chance we chose "Fruehlingserwachen" of Wedekind. Never shall I forget that evening. The quiet, dark wooden walls of the theatre, and the comfortable box they showed us into, in which we sat, seeing but unseen in the obscurity; the lack of applause when the curtain fell, and then—the performance. German actors lead the world, in my opinion, and the intensity of those players, the skill with which they played those most unhappy children, the tremulous, inadequate mother, that dark scene with its girl-women shriek, left us breathless and dazed.

The highest possible tribute I pay to German actors, and to some of those gathered together that winter in

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that theatre. Such a *Falstaff* I never saw as we saw there in "Henry V," nor such marvellous presentations of Shakespeare. Moissy as *Prince Hal* in his father's deathbed scene; the *Doll Tearsheet*; the collection of hangers-on in the Inn Scene, the understanding of the spirit of Shakespeare—all these were priceless joys. Shakespeare does not spell bankruptcy in Germany, and the people really love it, and perhaps there is a reason why.

The next night in the same house, you might see a translation of a French drawingroom comedy. With the exception of one or two, these people were quite as at home in that as in classic drama. That I had never believed possible till I saw it proven. It had always seemed to me that the French were absolutely unrivalled in such things as "Mlle. Georgette, ma femme"; but they were even more sincerely, yet just as lightly done by Reinhardt's people. It was always such a joy in Europe to go to the theatre in London, Paris or Berlin. To see Lavallière with her inimitable *gamine* ways, was the most delicious of pleasures; and the polish of the older actors of the French stage, the *Marquis* or *Marquise*, or old butler or housekeeper, as the case may be, is a wonderful model for the student. French actors seem to be able to come into a room, sit down at a table and talk for half an hour, using almost no gestures, without becoming in

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the least boresome or monotonous. When scenes of strong passion are wanted, the Germans, I think, excel their French rivals. A Frenchman, or, for that matter, any Latin, is inclined to rant just a bit, and become unconvincing, at least to an Anglo-Saxon mind; but the German, when called upon for strength and power of passion, rises thrillingly and gloriously, and completely sweeps you away.

Even in Darmstadt we had many notable performances. That of the "Versunkene Glocke," for instance, was most memorable. We had a splendid old actor for the *Well Spirit*, *Nickelmann*, and nothing could have been wetter or more unearthy than his sloshing slowly up from the depth of the well, his webbed, greenish fingers appearing clutchingly first, and then his grating, fishy croak, "*R-r-r-rautendelein! R-r-r-r-rautendelein!*" The faun was also excellently done by a young fellow with marvellous faun-like agility; altogether these unpretentious people realized the fairy-tale spirit, the wood feeling of the story, in a most imaginative, subtle way. Where in America in a town of Darmstadt's size could you see such a performance?

## CHAPTER XXIII

### COVENT GARDEN AND—AMERICA

**I**N due time we set out for London. One of our cousins had found us delightful diggings in M—— Street, which I was able to enjoy, as dear Mr. and Mrs. Jones sent me an extra cheque to impress London with. We were waited upon by an old butler, and his wife did the cooking. Such legs of lamb, and deep plum tarts, with lashings of clotted cream! Such snowy napery, and silver polished as only English butlers can polish it.

It was not by any means my first visit to London, professionally. I had sung in private drawing-rooms in previous seasons, and had also given a recital. Her Royal Highness Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, and her daughter, Princess Victoria, graciously consented to be my patronesses at this concert. I had not the slightest idea how to arrange for them, after they had kindly consented to be present, but I gathered that a special pair of comfortable chairs must be put directly below the stage, with a little table. Then I thought "Flowers or no

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flowers?" I should have loved to send them, but English Royalties are so simple and natural I instinctively felt that any ostentation would be distasteful. Somehow one hates to do the wrong thing in the presence of Personages; it is an un-American feeling, but a human one.

They applauded me a great deal, and after a bow of acknowledgment to the nice audience I gave the Princesses each time an English, straight-up-and-down curtsy, and I hope that was right. In Germany a back-swaying, one-toe-pointed-in-front curtsy was demanded. These things are at once trivial and vastly important.

The decent getting Their Royal Highnesses in and out of the hall I left to the capable manager, to whom Princess Christian said as she passed, "She ought to be singing in Covent Garden." I very soon was.

I was rather nervous at the beginning at Covent Garden. Most of the others were so famous, and all of them so much older than I. However, I soon got recognition and they were all very nice to me. I enjoyed especially talking to Van Rooy. He told me all about the wonderful armour he wore in the "Ring." Never have I seen his equal as the *Wanderer*. As he himself said, the old line of singers, the giants, the de Reszkes, Terninas, Lehmanns and Brandts, seemed to have died out. I often look for

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the grand line, the dignity, the flowing, noble breadth of gesture one saw in the older Wagnerian singers, but how often does one see it now? Of course, my memories of them are those of a very young girl, but I saw the same thing in Van Rooy, though his voice showed wear, and the bigness of their impersonations is stamped indelibly on my memory, dwarfing the lesser ones.

Nikisch came for the last few rehearsals. He took that raw, English-sounding orchestra, with its unrelated sounds of blaring brass, and rough strings, and unified and dignified it by his personality, his work and his brain power till it produced what he would have—Wagner in his glory. His gestures were like a sculptor's. My brother, who came to stay with us, also noticed this. Nikisch seemed to sculp the phrases out of the air, and brought home again to us both the close relation between the lines of music and the lines of noble sculpture. The Parthenon freeze—is it not music? My brother says the Air of Bach is absolutely one with the outlines of this masterpiece, just as pure, noble and majestically simple, moving in slow, stately rhythm.

We gave the "Ring" three times and I sang the *Erdas* and *Fricka* and *Waltrautes*. The latter in "Goetterdaemmerung" I enjoyed doing so much with Nikisch. We only rehearsed it at the piano, and he

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said as he sat down: "*Jetzt bin ich neugierig. Entweder kann die Waltraute wunderschön sein, oder sehr langweilig.*" ("Now I am curious. *Waltraute* can either be very beautiful or very uninteresting.") He did not find it *langweilig* however.

I had one of my fits of depression I so often get after singing, (when I feel I must leave the stage, I am so hopelessly bad, and nothing any one can do or say cheers me inwardly), and it was particularly abysmal, the day after *Waltraute*. One never sings just as one would like to, and in my head I hear the phrase so much more beautifully done than any one but Caruso can do it. That day I sat at lunch with my faithful Marjorie, who always puts up with me. We were lunching in a little place near us, and I was deep in the blues. Marjorie's eye fell on the *Daily Telegraph* and we saw a wonderful criticism by Robin Legge; just a few words, but so sincere and appreciative. It helped such a lot. Criticism can mean so much to one for good or evil. The thought of a cruelly amusing phrase the critic has coined, unable to resist the very human temptation, will come winging to you the next time you step out on the stage to sing the same rôle, and you feel that sardonic wave striking you afresh and jangling your already quivering nerves. It takes courage after that to go on. On the contrary, a few words of appreciation of what



CARUSO'S CARICATURE OF KATHLEEN HOWARD



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you have tried so hard, through such long years, to do will tide you over many black hours of discouragement, and you think: "I can't be so absolutely rotten, didn't X—— write that about me? and he's supposed to know something about it." An intelligent constructive criticism is the most helpful thing possible, and stimulates one to work to correct one's faults. Personal remarks wound one's feelings deeply, and one is obliged to swallow hard and go bravely on, but the policeman's life is not a happy one.

The Royal Opera is in the middle of the vegetable market, and on the days when produce arrives the streets are full of cockney porters. It was rather amusing one day, going to rehearsal. I was dressed in my new black satin suit from Paris, and a smart little white hat. A porter caught sight of me, pushed back the other men on both sides of me, and said, "Get out of the loidy's wy, cahn't yer, Bill? That's roight, Miss, I always loikes to see the lydies wen Ahm workin', that's right, Miss, very neat, too." The next day it was raining and I was not so smart, and the same man saw me and said with an air of disappointment, "Ah don't like it 'aaf so well as yisterdy, Miss."

I have often heard of American singers who could "bluff" or "hypnotize" directors into giving them chances which they thought they were entitled to, and

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from which they always emerged with flying colours. This is the tale of how I once, and only once, tried to "bluff," and how I nearly got caught at it.

When the list of rôles for Covent Garden was submitted to me in Berlin I had actually sung on the stage all of them but one, *Brangaene*. I always found this lady so weak, compared to *Isolde*, that she had never interested me especially, and I had never studied her. I decided, however, that having sung ninety-nine per cent. of the rôles they wanted I could risk the one per cent., *Brangaene*, hoping that Kirkby-Lunn would not relinquish her. I learned the rôle, though, in record time between concert dates, and trusted to "luck." The season was drawing to a close, and all the operas had passed off well, when, just as we were going to dinner one evening, I was called to the 'phone and told Madame Kirby-Lunn had been taken suddenly ill at the beginning of the first act of "Tristan," would probably not be able to go on in the second, and would I please come right down and make up.

In a nervous tremor, for *Brangaene* is not easy without orchestra rehearsal, and I was not quite sure of all the business cues, I went down, hunted out something to wear, put on my trusty "beauty" wig, hurriedly went over the second act with an assistant conductor, finding my memory was standing the strain, and then stood trembling in the wings. I thought to

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myself "Nemesis!" and shivered. What I hoped was—that if Madame really was going to have to give up it might be just before the lovely "Warnung" behind the scenes, because I had always wanted to sing that.

There I stood and the rouge soaked into my face as it always mysteriously does, when one is not at one's best, leaving me pale and anxious—a real *Brangaene*. Poor Madame Kirkby-Lunn sang just as beautifully as ever though, but fainted after the second act. I went into her dressing room and offered to do the last bit and let her go home after her plucky fight. She, however, said she realized it was a thankless task for a singer to finish another singer's performance, and that she would not think of asking me to do it. She rested awhile, I still hovering, as requested by the management, till all was over; and I then went home, more exhausted than if I had sung a performance, but resolved to sin no more, and thanking my gods that I had not had to face that critical assemblage without adequate preparation.

The Italian season was to come directly after ours, and they all came drifting in during our last days, to report for rehearsal. One day as I was up in my dressing room, preparing for a matinée, I heard a golden droning below me, rising and falling on half breath—Caruso at a room rehearsal. Words cannot

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describe the beauty of it, but it gave me exquisite pleasure. A day or two later I was at the Opera House on some errand and chanced to hear the rehearsal of "Pagliacci." Caruso was strolling about the stage, beautifully dressed as usual, with a pale grey Derby hat, gloves of wash-leather and light-coloured cane. The time came for his famous solo. He stood near the footlights with his eyes on the conductor, as we usually do when running over a familiar rôle with an unfamiliar conductor. He began softly with his wonderful effortless stream of tone, so characteristic, and so impossible of imitation. As the music worked on his emotions, always just below the surface with this great artist, his voice thrilled stronger and stronger in spite of him, till suddenly in full flood it poured out its luscious stream—and one thanked God anew for such a voice.

Covent Garden on the night of a Court ball holds the most brilliant audience I have ever seen. The English woman is at her best in evening dress, the jewels are fabulous and the whole affair most dazzling. I remember one evening seeing King Manoel of Portugal in a box. It was shortly after his hasty flight from his own country, and by an odd chance his box was just under a very large "Exit" sign, the pertinence of which was striking.

Destinn was our *Senta* in "Holländer." She was

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just back from America, and at rehearsal she had to cut out several portamenti which, she said, she had contracted from the Italians, but which infuriated the German conductor. At the stage rehearsals she directed everything in accordance with Bayreuth tradition, which attaches the utmost importance to every slightest stage position; and the other singers followed her directions with an almost reverent devotion. At the performance she was wonderful, as usual. She wore a real Norwegian bridal headdress, a sort of basket of flowers. A Cockney super, on his way out, remarked in passing me, "I s'y, wot price Destinn's hat?"

It was strange, coming from Germany, where every word almost is understood by the audience, to sing to people whose facial expression did not respond to the text; one feels that the inner meaning of the words is lost, is going for nothing, and this leads to a vague sense of irritation, if one allows the impression to dominate.

There were several young Americans with us with glorious voices, straight from Jean de Reszke's studio. They were to sing the *Rheintöchter*, and some of the *Walküren* in the "Ring." One or two were full of ambition and thankful for the experience they were receiving, while being paid. Some of them, however, showed a quite extraordinary attitude, not rare among

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students of the moneyed class. The air was filled with their complaints at the length of rehearsals, at the discomfort of the swings for the *Rhinemaids*, at anything and everything. I was present one day when one of them called Mr. Percy Pitt aside and gravely took him to task for not having the swings adjusted to her comfort—thereby incidentally killing her chances with the management, for a beginner is before anything a beginner in a great Opera House, and is supposed to find her level and make no fuss about it. These girls constantly spoke loftily of their displeasure at the way things were run. When they were offered an extension of their contracts, owing to the repetitions of the "Ring," they could hardly be brought to consider signing on. I said to them, knowing the game, "Girls, some day you will be on your knees to get such engagements as you now hold. You have the chance of singing difficult parts with a great Master in a great Opera House, and you don't seem in the least to realize what that means."

I regret to say my prophecy was nearly correct, for I think only one, a really serious girl, has prospered in her career. The attitude one assumes to one's operatic work in early years is surely reflected later, and the best advice a student can follow is that given me by Schumann-Heink, "Sing everything, no matter what they ask you to do."

## COVENT GARDEN AND—AMERICA

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It was very amusing to hear the discussions as to what the audience should wear. We gave the performances more or less on the Bayreuth plan, beginning early and with one unusually long pause. As it was broad daylight at the hour set for the curtain to go up, and as the perfect Londoner loathes to be about after dark in anything but evening dress, the problem bothered many. Besides, evening dress is *de rigueur* at Covent Garden. Some rushed home in the longest pause to dress and dine; some frankly omitted the first acts and came late, splendidly be-jewelled; some wore evening dresses and kept on their evening coats till the sun was decently down; and then bared their suitably naked shoulders. Others were just dubby and high-necked, and brought sandwiches in their pockets, feeling the holier and more Germanly reverent in consequence.

It is a great help to be able to afford to have some one with you in opera life. Home surroundings are the most conducive to good work, and it is hard to make a home alone; but you do not absolutely *need* any one, if this is not possible. My "morals" were never in danger—no "infamous proposals" were made to me by agent, conductor or director. In my first engagement, one or two of the giddier members of the company had affairs with young officers—in no

## CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER

case a flagrant scandal, as with a married man. Their relations to each other in the theatre were all that could be demanded. The most exaggeratedly correct behaviour was exacted from me. One day in Metz, for example, we went for a walk in the country with the lyric baritone, a nice little chap, who was a great friend of ours. It was a lovely, frosty day in autumn, and we were walking fast through a forest road, when we passed a carriage with the very prim wife of an officer sitting in it. The next day, an acquaintance of ours told us, as a joke, that the same woman had said that afternoon to her, "I thought you told me that Fräulein Howard was a lady?" "So she is," said our friend. "Oh, no," said the other, "she can't be. I saw her and her sister walking with one of the singers from the theatre, and they were behaving very badly." "What were they doing?" asked our friend. "They were all three holding on to his stick!" said she, in a horrified tone!

I went abroad to learn my business and I learned it. There is much talk about it not being necessary to go abroad to prepare oneself for an operatic career, but the time has not yet come in America when the student can find the same opportunity to practice, or work out *on the stage* her beginner's faults. In Europe you can do this in blissful semi-obscurity. I hope and believe the time will come when a girl will

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not have to go through all I went through in order to develop her talent, but may do it in her own country. But the wonderfulness of Europe for those whose eyes are open cannot yet be replaced by America, and a real artist will surely flower more perfectly on that side of the water.

To those who go I can only say that I hope they may have the tremendous advantage of fairy god-parents, as I had, and perhaps a sister Marjorie.

After the season closed at Covent Garden I met the manager of the new Century Opera, soon to be opened in New York. He offered me a long contract, and I finally decided to return to America. I saw a photograph of Edward Kellogg Baird in a musical paper at this time, and read of his connection with the enterprise. I said to myself, "That is the type of man I shall marry—if I ever do marry."

I came to the Century, met my husband, E. K. B., and worked with him for the success of the opera, which lay very near our hearts; but the war and other unfortunate circumstances proved too much to overcome, and we were forced to suspend. I finally attained the Metropolitan Opera, which I find the most absorbingly interesting house with which I have ever been connected, and which is the greatest school of all.

## **CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER**

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### **REPERTOIRE**

1. **Carmen** .....In French, German, English.
2. **Amneris** .....(Aida) French, German, English, Italian.
3. **Azucena** .....(Trovatore) Italian, German, English.
4. **Fides** .....(Prophète) French, German.
5. **Dalila** .....(Samson et Dalila) French, German, English.
6. **Martha** .....(In Faust) French, German, English.
7. **Siebel** .....(In Faust) French, German, English.
8. **Maddalena** .....(In Rigoletto) Italian, German, English.
9. **Nancy** .....(In Marta) Italian, German, English.
10. **Ortrud** .....(Lohengrin) German, English.
11. **Lucia** .....(Cav. Rus.) Italian, German, English.
12. **Lola** .....(Cav. Rus.) Italian, German, English.
13. **Mary** .....(Flieg. Hollaender) German.

## REPERTOIRE

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14. Erda .....(Siegfried).
15. Erda .....(Rheingold).
16. Schwertleite .....(Walkuere).
17. Grimgerde .....(Walkuere).
18. Waltraute .....(Walkuere).
19. Waltraute .....(Goetterdaemmerung).
20. Erste Norn .....(Goetterdaemmerung).
21. Fricka .....(Walkuere).
22. Flosshilde .....(Goetterdaemmerung).
23. Flosshilde .....(Rheingold).
24. Hexe .....(Haensel und Gretel)  
German, English.
25. Nicklaus .....(Hoffman) German, Eng-  
lish.
26. Valencienne .....(Merry Widow).
27. Frederika .....(Waltzertraum).
28. Dritte Dame .....(Zauberfloete).
29. Oeffentliche Meinung .(Orpheus in der Unter-  
welt).
30. Orfeo .....(Gluck).
31. Molly .....(Geisha).
32. Georgette .....(Gloeckchen).
33. Pamela .....(Fra Diavolo).
34. Graefin .....(Trompeter).
35. Orlofsky .....(Fledermaus).
36. Frau Reich .....(Lustige Weibe).
37. Page .....(Salome).

## **CONFESSIONS OF AN OPERA SINGER**

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- 38. Olga .....(Dollar Prinzessin).
- 39. Magdalena .....(Meistersingers).
- 40. Graefin .....(Heilige Elisabeth) Ger-  
man, English.
- 41. Martha .....(Undine).
- 42. Hedwig .....(Wilhelm Tell) German,  
English.
- 43. Gertrude .....(Hans Heiling).
- 44. Marzellina .....(Figaro) Italian, Ger-  
man.
- 45. Graefin .....(Wildschuetz).
- 46. Ascanio .....(Benvenuto Cellini).
- 47. Jacqueline .....(Arzt wieder willen) Ger-  
man, English.
- 48. Gertrude .....(Romeo and Juliet) Ger-  
man.
- 49. Stephano .....(Romeo and Juliet) Ger-  
man, English.
- 50. Hexe .....(Sieben Schwaben).
- 51. Ulrica .....(Masken Ball) Italian,  
German.
- 52. Hexe .....(Koenigskinder).
- 53. Cleo .....(Kuhreigen).
- 54. Suzuki .....(Butterfly) English, Ital-  
ian, German.
- 55. Magdalena .....(Evangelimann).

## REPERTOIRE

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56. Carmela .....(Jewels of the Madonna)  
English, Italian, German.  
57. Mother .....(Louise).  
58. Cieca .....(Giaconda)      German,  
English, Italian.  
59. Nutrice .....(Boris).  
60. Blumenmaedchen ....(Parsifal).  
61. Annina .....(Rosenkavalier).  
62. Albine .....(Thais).  
63. Mistress Benson ....(Lakme).  
64. Margarethe .....(Weisse Dame).  
65. Cypra .....(Zigeuner Baron).  
66. Fattoumah .....(Marouf).  
67. Amelfa .....(Le Coq d'Or).  
68. Mrs. Everton .....(Shanewis).

Etc., etc.

### STUDIED NOT SUNG

- Brangaene .....(Tristan).  
Mutter Gertrud.....(Haensel und Gretel)

Etc., etc.

THE END









Miss Moulton  
Charles Snyder  
Virginia Williams  
Rene P. Galup?

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